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READING AND RE-READING YOUNG ADULT MEMOIRS: A NARRATIVE STUDY
WITH PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum & Instruction

by

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I describe a narrative study in which five pre-service and in-service teachers read and re-read three young adult memoirs and discussed their responses in a series of book group meetings. The purpose was to examine how teachers discuss young adult memoirs, what they might learn about themselves in the process of reading and reflecting in book discussions and in a Commonplace Book they kept, and how they might use young adult memoirs in classrooms including, but not limited to English language arts (ELA) classrooms. Data was collected through transcribing a series of book group meetings, as well as collecting a set of books into which the participants logged their responses. Following the completion of the book group meetings, I conducted individual interviews with each participant. I found that the participants were willing to make personal and pedagogical connections to each text, but that including the texts in their curricula presented several obstacles. Nevertheless, I found that using a book group in teacher education research to be an efficient and effective way to answer multiple complex, qualitative research questions at one time in a semi-structured setting, low-risk setting

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“This book was *amazing*!! I’ve never read anything like that before,” Chad¹ gushed, holding up the familiar yellow paperback as though the rest of us had never seen it before, even though we had all just read the same book. “I can imagine high school would’ve been different if I’d gotten to read stuff like this. Real-life stuff,” he continued (Meeting two, 2/20/13). And with that, we launched into a discussion of Jack Gantos’s *Hole in My Life*, one of the texts we had chosen together to read, discuss, and re-read.

Including Chad, there were six of us in this diverse group, all teachers or pre-service teachers with various degrees of experience, from ten-year veterans of the classroom to college undergraduates who were still developing an idea of what it means to teach. We all represented differing backgrounds and subjectivities; our teaching backgrounds, for instance, ranged from special education to elementary school to high school English. On this night, we had gathered together to discuss our common love for books, in particular, young adult literature. Seated in a comfortable suite inside the building that houses the School of Education, we had chosen a room that had a small sofa and several overstuffed chairs arranged around a coffee table in a way that encouraged casual, authentic conversation. It seemed the perfect compromise between the academic and the every day, the perfect setting to discuss our readings of young adult memoirs.

Background

I have been reading texts such as Gantos’s, which I would classify as a young adult memoir, for several years now. Far more than the traditional *bildungsroman*, these coming-of-age texts are sometimes narrated by young adults and sometimes narrated by adult subjects recalling their adolescence from a number of perspectives and in a number of formats: journals, photo essays, creative non-fiction, graphic memoirs, as well as traditional, straight-forward prose

¹ All references to participants are done so by pseudonym.

narratives. Moreover, they offer alternative accounts of identity, especially adolescent identity development, far different from the standard, traditional autobiographies² more frequently encountered in school curricula (Kirby & Kirby, 2010). Part of a wider genre of young adult literature (generally referred to as YAL, and more frequently recognized for its fiction than its autobiographies), young adult memoirs differ from traditional autobiographies by complicating, rather than simplifying and unifying, identity development during adolescence (Kirby & Kirby, 2010).

Having taught high school English for ten years, I am familiar with young adult literature and its applications in the secondary English language arts (ELA) classroom. Indeed, I have taught a few young adult novels myself, especially when I could pair them with standard, canonical classics. But while young adult texts, even some young adult memoirs, have become standard fare in secondary ELA classrooms, their potential in other disciplines and grade levels remains untapped. How might young adult memoirs, in particular, be useful for teachers across disciplines? And what happens when teachers and pre-service teachers read them together in a group setting?

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of my study was to examine how teachers discuss young adult memoirs, what they might learn about themselves in the process of reading and reflecting in book discussions and in a Commonplace Book they kept, and how they might use young adult memoirs in classrooms including, but not limited to English language arts (ELA) classrooms. To find out, I gathered together a group of in-service and pre-service teachers from various disciplines: social studies, counseling, ELA, special education, and higher education. Using a

² I distinguish young adult memoirs, which typically span a few years of the author's life, from traditional autobiographies which generally include the majority of the author's lifespan (up to the point of the writing). This distinction is expounded upon in the following chapter.

book-club approach to reading and discussing the books, and drawing from reader-response theory, in which the meanings of the texts are located in the interactions between the text and the reader, we read and re-read three young adult memoirs over the course of three months, keeping record of our reactions within the margins of the texts themselves. My specific research questions were as follows:

1. What types of stories do in-service and pre-service teachers tell about themselves when they engage with young adult memoirs?
2. How do the participants' aesthetic responses to the text, in the book discussions and in the Commonplace Books³, compare to the ways they talk about using young adult memoirs in their own future classrooms?
3. What might teachers learn about themselves as readers from and through the process of reading and re-reading texts and keeping responses to them in Commonplace Books?

Theoretical Framework

Because I believe that personal responses to literature, those in which we relate to characters, settings, and plot lines in personal and individual ways, are as valid as official or critical interpretations, I chose reader-response theory as the theoretical framework within which I designed my study, selected the participants, and collected and analyzed my results. Specifically, I draw on a rich tradition of reader-response theories, which are undergirded by a constructivist understanding that conceptualizes knowledge as created, rather than discovered; fluid; changeable; and socially, culturally, and historically situated, rather than definite, universal, and ahistorical (Davies 2004). Indeed, starting with Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) transactional theory, most reader-response or reader-oriented critics look to the interaction

³ Commonplace Book is the name educational theorist Denis Sumara borrowed from writer Michael Ondaatje to describe the process of reading a book multiple times and tracking responses to the book in the margins of the text, over a long period of time. I discuss this at length in the following chapter.

between the text and the individual reader as the site of meaning and interpretation, as opposed to New Critical readings which locate meaning in the text alone.

However, until recently, few reader-response theorists considered the ways that meanings are generated in social settings as well as individual settings, and that the interactions among individual readers as they encounter a text come to bear on their reactions to it. Thus, Dennis Sumara's concept of "embodied reading" (1995) shapes my specific understanding of reader-response theory and my use of it in this dissertation by pushing reader-response theory beyond Rosenblatt's two-dimensional, transactional theory. Instead of theorizing about hypothetical or ideal readers (which tend to take on white, male, middle-class characteristics), Sumara (1995) shows how readers encounter texts in gendered, raced, and classed bodies, and that the intersections of these various markers of identity come to bear on the ways readers interpret texts, both in individual and in social settings. Indeed, the notion of social or communal interpretations being just as valid as personal responses is of particular importance in Sumara's (2002) *Why Reading Literature in School Still Matters* as well as his (1995) *Public Readings in Private*.

Second, other than reader-response theories, I also draw from multiple, though disparate, trends in feminist scholarship, particularly as they offer counter-narratives and alternative practices to the dominant (White, masculine) discourses in literary theory. For one, as I endeavor to discuss the young adult autobiographical text as a subgenre, I draw on more recent work in feminist scholarship which actively seeks to deconstruct White, middle-class, and masculine conceptions of knowledge production, specifically literary production, which led to the formation of the literary canon that still forms the basis of most classroom curricula. Specifically, I look beyond traditional formalist (New Critical) concepts of genre, which seek to

classify a work based on taxonomic features, and instead, embrace Miller's work on genre theory (1984, 2004), particularly her recent work which interrogates rhetorical genre theory in light of new social media. Miller's (1984) "Genre as Social Action" speaks to Smith and Watson's (2010) later work in autobiography as a genre by destabilizing the formal features that define a genre (in this case, autobiography), and instead, interrogate its rhetorical situation. In short, Miller (1984) conceives of autobiographical instances (which includes both speech acts and written texts) as occasions rather than forms. This fluid understanding of genre takes into account that young adult autobiographies take various forms (graphic memoir, the journal, autobiographical fiction, *testimonio*, etc...) and can be recognized as "young adult" by both their formalist characteristics and by the audience who reads them.

Moreover, feminist scholarship in autobiographical studies has also broadened autobiography as a genre (Smith & Watson 2010) by considering the ways women and marginalized populations conceptualize the autobiographical "I" as socially constituted, as opposed to the individualist "I" of traditional masculine autobiographies, and such work has influenced the list of young adult autobiographical texts (many of them written by women and/or writers of color) that I offered for the participants' choice of texts. Finally, feminist scholarship in personal narrative analysis, such as Maynes, et al.'s (2008) work in personal narrative, Eakin's (2008) work in autobiographical theory and identity, and Smith and Watson's (2010) work in life-writing, have also informed my discussion of young adult autobiographical texts, in particular as these demonstrate how acts of self-narration create "selves." Thus, I draw from Smith and Watson's (2010) definition of autobiography that rejects a discreet set of formal features for the genre, and instead, focuses on the occasion of autobiographical text as "a general term for life writing in which one takes his or her own life as its subject," including in that

understanding semi-fictionalized accounts of true events, diaries, memoirs, testimonies, as well as autobiographies in their more traditional form (p.10).

Finally, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000), Munro Hendry's (2007), and Riessmann's (2008) works in narrative inquiry, analysis, and critique provide the framework for my methodology, all emphasizing a focus on a mutually respectful relationship between the researcher and the participants, which contributes to the conditions that produced the narrative, rather than focusing on a narrative's objective "truth."

Methodology

In this study, I argue that reader-response methods, such as Sumara's (2002) use of the *Commonplace Book*, create occasions for researchers to engage in narrative inquiry, a methodology that considers journals, diaries, memoirs, oral histories, letters, and other, non-published forms of life-writing, as texts worthy of analysis (Patton 2002). Therefore, I drew on the traditions of narrative inquiry in this study's design, as I wrote research questions that left room for participant input and expansion, collected narratives in the form of discussions and interviews, and transcribed, analyzed, and presented these narratives. Specifically, in the tradition of narrative inquiry, research questions were kept open-ended, as to allow for the participants' input throughout all phases of the study. In fact, typical of a narrative inquiry, the participants suggested additional or alternative research questions on their own and often broached discussion topics that I had previously not suggested (Riessmann 2008).

Secondly, in the tradition of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2002; Riessmann 2008; Maynes, et al., 2008), discussions were primarily participant-led, rather than researcher-led, as I allowed the participants to choose by vote which texts (from a suggested list) we read together, to begin each book discussion by asking questions of one another or making comments,

point out which passages they wished to discuss, and determine the course that the book discussion will take. Thirdly, in the tradition of narrative inquiry, I as the researcher worked with the participants throughout all phases of narrative transcription, analysis, and presentation. To that end, the participants had multiple opportunities to review the transcriptions of group discussions and their individual interview transcriptions; they also had opportunities to provide some input into the analysis, and they had multiple opportunities to provide input on the manner the final analysis was presented (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002; Riessmann, 2008). And of course, because narrative research always poses the risk of the participants feeling vulnerable or regretting the extent to which they have revealed confidential information about themselves in the process, the participants were constantly reminded that they could withdraw from the study-- and withdraw their narratives-- at any time.

Limitations of the Study

While this study examines the stories pre-service and in-service teachers tell when they insert themselves into texts, specifically young adult autobiographical texts, and queries how they may consider using such texts in their own classrooms, if the ultimate end of all narrative research is to illuminate understanding of the self in order to better understand the Other, then I must take seriously a caveat of narrative research identified by Phillion and He (2004). "Stories are not enough," they explain. "We need theory to position these experiential accounts in a sociopolitical and educational context to expand our narrative imagination and to understand ourselves, and others as we interact together in school and communities"(p.5). Likewise, Florio-Ruane (2001) cautions that "teacher education's contemporary focus on reflection tends to strengthen cultural biases if not undertaken critically," (p. 34). In other words, a significant limitation of this study is that while it collects and presents pre-service and in-service teachers'

stories and asks the participants to reflect on them critically, especially as they engage with the narrative accounts of others whose lives are different, this is still no guarantee that the participants will have a greater understanding of others or themselves, even through the use of reflective reading and writing practices. While I have sought to address this by including a participant group of various cultural, racial, gender, generational, and class identities and have offered for consideration several counter-narratives to the texts under consideration, a short-term (one-semester) study might not afford the amount of time needed for the participants to have the kinds of insight necessary to effect true change, inside and outside their classrooms.

Moreover, even as this study aims to expose the participants to an underused genre for curriculum and classroom use, there is no guarantee that the particular texts chosen will be of use in the very specific classrooms in which the participants will teach.

Summary

A number of scholars in the field of English education have argued for an increase in personal-response-type assessments in literature classes (Thompkins, 1980; Probst, 1988), even if they must supplement, and not replace, short-answer comprehension questions that dominate the current era of standardized-test-driven, Common Core curricula. Thus, I am certainly not the first to argue for reader-response methods to be used in the classroom. However, this study offers a number of unique contributions to the field.

First, this study adds to a growing trend calling for the young adult memoirs to be included in the curriculum (De Gracia, 2012; Johannessen, 2002; Kirby & Kirby, 2010; Schick & Hurren, 2003). While some attention has been paid to traditional autobiographies, there are few, if any, formal definitions as yet of the young adult memoir, and only recently has any scholarly attention been given to it. Nevertheless, the accessible language, relatable subject

matter, and innovative prose styles of the young adult memoirs have potentially equipped the genre to appeal to a wider range of young adult readers, and as such, should be included in studies with readers of young adult literature

Secondly, this study follows a resurgence of interest in reader-response theory, renewing interest in a field that merits reexamination in light of Sumara's poststructuralist theorizing of it. Moreover, this is one of the first studies to extend Sumara's work using the Commonplace Book as an assessment method that considers actual, not hypothetical or ideal readers, encountering texts and responding to them based on their lived experiences.

Thirdly, while this study continues a rich tradition of using narrative inquiry for various purposes in teacher education programs (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999; Julango, Isenberg & Jan, 1995), but mainly as a means for pre-service teachers to engage in critical self reflection (Bernhardt, 2009; Conle, 1996; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Howard & Parker, 2009; Hoffman-Kip, Artiles, & Lopez-Torres, 2003; Landay, 2001; Phillion & He, 2004), this study undertakes a unique research methodology by using a reader-response type text as source material for narrative inquiry. By examining the passages of young adult memoirs to which preservice teachers respond, at length, through both the Commonplace Book and in book discussions, this method allowed me to engage in narrative inquiry with pre-service and in-service teachers, looking at the ways these teachers situate themselves in coming-of-age texts as they simultaneously develop their own identities as teachers and future teachers.

Finally and most importantly, this study introduces pre-service and in-service teachers to both a subgenre and a method of student assessment, neither of which have been in wide usage, and both of which they may use in their future classrooms.

Before closing, I would like to clarify a few terms that I use throughout this dissertation:

Autobiography: A wide-ranging genre of life-writings, including, but not limited to, the traditional, chronological autobiography, the diary, the journal, the *testimonio*, the *bildungsroman*, and the memoir.

Memoir: A subset of the genre autobiography, memoir is usually more experience-centered than event-centered, covering a shorter span of one's life than the traditional autobiography.

Narrative inquiry: refers to a collection of research and analysis methods that values, as a legitimate source of knowledge, the stories that individuals tell themselves and others about their lives, that considers these stories and their interpretations as meaningful knowledge in education and other social sciences.

Reader-response theories: While applied differently, reader-response theories refer to a way of reading and interpreting literature, which argues that meaning is located not simply in the text, but in the interaction between reader and text.

In the following chapters, I shall detail a study conducted with pre-service and in-service teachers reading and re-reading young adult memoirs. In Chapter Two, I shall detail the reader response theory at length and situate my study within a tradition of reflective writing and book clubs in teacher education programs. In Chapter Three, I shall discuss my use of narrative inquiry as a methodology. In Chapter Four, I shall present my findings in the form of three large narratives. Finally, in Chapter Five, I shall discuss the implications of my findings and make recommendations for the use of young adult memoirs in the classroom, especially as teachers seek to implement the new Common Core Curriculum Standards Initiative.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in all phases, from choice of topic, to design, to participant selection, to data collection and analysis, is never neutral. Indeed, all research, even that which claims to be “scientific” and “objective,” is framed by the researcher’s lived experiences, underlying theoretical assumptions, and ideological leanings. While the major purpose of this chapter is to offer a review of the existing literature on using reflective writing in teacher education programs, I first wish to situate my theorizing within two areas of scholarship, reader-response theories and autobiographical studies, which have shaped my development as a researcher as I consider this and subsequent projects. Following this discussion, I will situate my project within a tradition of autobiographical reflection in teacher education programs and illuminate what new insights my project may have to offer.

Theoretical Framework

Reader-Response Theories

Early reader-response theories. Reader-response theories, briefly, may be understood as a school of theories which, reacting against the New Critical school of literary criticism, recognize the relationship between the reader and his or her various social and historical contexts as the site of primary production of a text’s meaning. Beginning with Rosenblatt’s (1938) *Literature as Exploration*, which lays the groundwork for her concept of transactional theory, early reader-response theorists (Gibson, 1950; Iser, 1980; Holland, 1980; Fish, 1980) developed a theoretical model of reading that depicted readers engaging with texts and incorporating their own experiences and interpretations into these texts. Coming from various understandings of reading, these theorists nuanced the way reader-response theories could be understood and applied. For example, Gibson (1950, 1980) distinguished between ideal readers and mock

readers. Later, Iser (1980) emphasized the role of a reader's imagination as he discussed the concept of "gaps" in the text that readers fill with their imaginations and experiences, while Holland (1980) foregrounded the role of the reader's unconscious desires as he or she interpreted a text. Finally, Fish (1980) argued that readings are not only individual but also are social, though constrained by one's interpretive community and the already decided upon parameters and limitations of interpretation that such a community might put in place. The advantage of this understanding of reading was that, for the first time, readers' responses were central, and their interpretations democratized. The disadvantage of reader response theory, however, was that it was limited in its ability to situate the subjective response. Unfortunately, none of these theorists considered how actual flesh-and-blood readers, what Sumara (2003) calls "embodied readers," living in real bodies, might encounter texts differently, according to circumstances of identity and social context. Instead, most of these theorists merely speculated how their idealized, and by extension, masculinized—readers might respond, as Rosenblatt (1938), Gibson (1950), Iser (1980), Fish (1980), and Holland (1980) gave little critical attention to the ways *actual* readers, marked by race, class, and gender, might respond.

Contemporary reader- response theorist Denis Sumara. Thus, it would be Dennis Sumara, in *Private Readings in Public* (1995) who considered the significant influence that continually changing social and historical contexts have over reading and to examine how embodied readers (his term for such raced, classed, and gendered bodies encountering texts) might approach a text. Sumara is not simply concerned with individual interpretations made by individual readers reading individual texts, but how these interpretations contribute to the reader's development of insights into his or her position in society, and what the implications such collective insights and interpretations have for a more socially just society as a whole.

Indeed, Sumara goes beyond Rosenblatt's (1938) transactional theory of reading to draw on both poststructuralism (in his noting of the absences in a text) and contemporary ecology to provide a theory of reading as embodied, opening the possibility for social change. By "embodied literary experience," Sumara refers to the way "reading is the act of continually noticing and interpreting links between and among different 'bodies' that comprise our physical, psychic and ecological experience of the world" (2003, p. 92). Thus, I draw on Sumara's reader-response theories to understand the "complex ways literary engagement and response become complicit with the layered contexts of reading" (Sumara 2002, 24) and seek to describe the way "individual responses to literature are inextricable from the interpersonal, intertextual experiences of reading" (29). In other words, Sumara takes reader-response theory from its one-dimensional relationship between one reader and one text, which Rosenblatt (1938) originally posited as a "transaction," and instead shows how readings change between/among readers in various social contexts and across time, as well.

In fact, the point of his later work, *Why Reading Literature in School Still Matters* (2002), is to move reader-response theories into pragmatist, even poststructuralist understandings of language, knowledge, and identity and ground them in classroom practice. By furthering his notion of embodied reading and situating his particular method, the Commonplace Book, into various pedagogical reading contexts, Sumara's text might be summed up in three key points:

- First, a key component of the development of insight is the study of literary texts through reflective methods, such as the use of Commonplace Books, a pedagogical method Sumara borrows from writer Michael Ondaatje (1992) which involves readers inscribing and annotating their impressions, memories, associations, and predictions into a text with

each reading of it, along with the use of historical and philosophical, and biographical materials as supplements.

- Secondly, because a reader's insights are emerging and evolving, Sumara argues that multiple readings of a single text both strengthen and challenge insights gained. Sumara explains that the deepest insights are created, layered, and challenged over time, and even insight that emerges in a "gradual instant" has required months, if not years, to emerge.
- Thirdly, because knowledge is not produced by the efforts of isolated individuals, but through the assenting and dissenting voices of individuals working in collaboration, also key to the development of insight is Sumara's emphasis on reading and studying a text along with other readers. That is, not only do individuals who read and re-read texts develop insights, but reading and interpreting texts both individually and collectively fosters both personal and collective development.

I draw on Sumara in particular because his reader-response theory is well grounded in his own experience in pedagogical practice with readers of various ages, and I am interested in working with those teachers who will read texts with students. *Why Reading Literature in School Still Matters* (2002) is not only a work of theorizing, it exemplifies specific methods, as well. In fact, it is a Commonplace Book, such as Sumara describes, that I wished to use as a springboard for narrative inquiry with pre-service teachers. However, as I stated in the previous chapter, Sumara's Commonplace Books were kept using works of fiction because he was more interested in imagination and insight, while I have been interested in the development of teacher identity *through encounters with autobiographical works*. Therefore, the Commonplace Books I kept with pre-service and in-service teachers were young adult memoirs. In the following section, I shall discuss the autobiographical theorists from whom I draw in order to shape my

understanding of the young adult memoir as a distinct subgenre of autobiography. This distinction, I argue, is useful both for pedagogical purposes in the classroom and in my present study with pre-service teachers, some of whom are in the liminal space between student and teacher identity.

Memoir and Autobiographical Studies. While the participants in this study read only young adult memoirs, I frame my theorizing of memoirs within the wider scope of autobiographical studies in general⁴. Indeed, understanding autobiography as either a distinct genre or an extension of fiction is hotly contested, as much scholarly attention, especially from feminist critics, has been devoted to its many theoretical complexities. For example, within the genre debate, scholars of autobiography argue whether autobiography should be represented as a fiction or type of nonfiction (Gilmore, 1994; Conway, 1998; Anderson, 2001); the degree to which any given text may be autobiographical (Gilmore, 1994); how much “lying” an autobiographer can engage in without violating the autobiographical pact (Gilmore, 1994; Anderson, 2001; Eakin, 2008); how well an autobiographical subject can be represented in printed form (Gilmore, 1994; Smith & Watson, 2010); and the degree to which an autobiographical subject can or should be read as a unified whole (Conway, 1998; Smith & Watson, 2010;).

Even outside the genre debate, the term “autobiography” is still problematic. It may refer to autobiography in the traditional sense, an individual chronicling his or her major life events in a roughly chronological, linear fashion (Olney, 1998; Anderson, 2001), or the term may refer to any first-hand account of one major life event that spanned even only a portion of the writer’s

⁴ Following Smith and Watson (2010), I treat memoir as a subset of the larger genre autobiography, however other scholars see memoir and autobiography as distinct rhetorical occasions. James Moffett, in particular, defines them as separate genres because in autobiography, the understood subject of the genre is the author him/herself, while the understood subject of memoir is the author’s experience of something or someone else.

life, though the latter definition is often distinguished as “memoir” (Kirby & Kirby, 2010; Smith & Watson, 2010). From the feminist postmodern perspective of Conway (1998), it might alternatively be called a “new kind of narrative outburst for those of different sexual persuasions, for the handicapped, for victims of abuse” (p. 152). Recently, autobiographical scholar Eakin (2008) defined autobiography as “all acts of self-narration” (p. 12). Indeed, beginning as a Western method of representing a unified (white, male) and exemplary self (Olney 1998) made famous by the autobiographies of Augustine, Rousseau, and Franklin, as well as St. Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Binger, two women mystics of the Middle Ages, most critics of autobiography have now expanded the term to include slave narratives, testimonios, memoirs, and diaries, and the degree of “truth” an autobiography may tell has been extended.

Nevertheless, what is agreed upon, at least by contemporary scholars, is that autobiography is a genre that “explores identity and the world, even as it *appears* to describe one person’s identity in the world,” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 33, emphasis added). Indeed, I emphasize the word “appears” to point to the recent complicating of the idea of identity in autobiography, as most postmodern, feminist, and poststructuralist scholars of the genre “challenge the idea that there is a continuous, seamless ‘I’ or self about whom they are writing. Instead, there is in autobiography a ‘complex weaving’ of selves viewed in terms of the author’s multiple experiences in contact with others,” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 13). In fact, as I will show later in my discussion of young adult memoirs, the identities constructed in these texts are anything but unified, coherent, rational selves.

In this section, I have offered a brief discussion of the complexities of the term autobiography because I wish to further complicate it. In particular, I understand the young adult memoir as part of the wider genre of autobiographies, though they have some distinguishing

characteristics on which I shall elaborate, which enable me to differentiate them from more traditional autobiographies. I find distinguishing young adult memoirs from traditional autobiographies useful in this study because I argue that the young adult memoir has greater pedagogical use with secondary-education students than traditional autobiographies do. Nevertheless, I draw on Smith and Watson's (2008) very broad definition of autobiography, "a general term for life writing in which one takes his or her own life as its subject," including in that understanding "semi-fictionalized accounts of true events, diaries, memoirs, testimonies, as well as autobiographies in their more traditional form," (p. 10) to shape my definition of young adult memoir. Indeed, I define the young adult memoir as any memoir, regardless of the form it takes, written for, marketed to,⁵ assigned to, or popular⁶ among young adults. And while this is not an exhaustive list, I argue that most contemporary⁷ young adult memoirs share at least one or more of the following characteristics, many of which are shared by other, non-autobiographical works of young adult literature:

- The bulk of the narrative is devoted to relating the adolescent experience and the adolescent search for identity and belonging (Erikson, 1959, 1980), regardless of the age of the autobiographer at the time of writing,
- The narrative may include controversial topics, such as frank discussions of sexual activity and sexuality, drug use, self-mutilating or self-destructive behaviors (such as cutting, self-starvation, purging), and jail or prison involvement (Glasgow 2002).

⁵ Carter (1997) argues that marketing and publishing divisions, not formalist characteristics of the text itself, determines whether a text is YA or not. While I still maintain that YA texts can be recognized by distinguishing characteristics as I have discussed above, I acknowledge, with Carter, that marketing plays a powerful role in determining how YA texts reach their intended (and unintended) audiences.

⁶ Crowe (2002) implies that YA is a genre in its own right, but acknowledges that "[d]e facto YA literature is adult literature that adolescents read, usually the canonized classics,"(p. 101).

⁷ There are also texts that do not share any of these characteristics: *Up from Slavery* (Booker T. Washington), *The Story of My Life* (Helen Keller), and *Gifted Hands* (Ben Carson) would be examples of such texts.

- The narrative may be related in accessible and sometimes profane language common to adolescents or in adolescent vernacular.
- The narrative may portray individual and/or social problems, both common and unusual, and solutions are neither easy nor immediate, and endings, of course, are unresolved (Glasgow, 2002) but generally hopeful.
- The narrator may not accept the world uncritically and may be willing to criticize and/or rebel against the social structures which uphold the systems and institutions that are the cause of the narrator's struggle and/or oppression.

In fact, while my study is among only a few studies that call for the use of young adult memoirs, as defined above, with pre-service or in-service teachers (Schick & Hurren, 2003; Kirby & Kirby, 2010, however, being arguments similar to mine), other English educators and practicing teachers have noted the benefits of using contemporary autobiographies and memoirs in the classroom for reasons that I have identified above. For example, Schick and Hurren (2003), working with pre-service teachers in Canada, use the young adult autobiography (their term) to disrupt the traditional narratives taught in the Canadian social studies curriculum. More recently, Kirby and Kirby (2010) argue that contemporary memoir (their term for what I would call young adult memoir) has pedagogical value because it is a "genre [that] literary critics have not overanalyzed" (p. 22) and that "connect[s] directly with students' lived experience," (p. 22). In addition, they argue, contemporary memoirs "derive their power. . . from the honest unfolding of human struggles and triumphs from which important lessons are learned, significant family events are preserved, and generations of family members braid the cord of their lived experiences," (p. 23). Likewise, choosing to use memoir to teach Vietnam War literature, Johannessen (2002) argues that "memoir can express more authentically what fiction can only

imagine,” (p. 41). Finally, and most recently, De Gracia (2012) uses graphic memoirs with her high school students because they depart from “traditional autobiographical format. Their synthesis of image and text work together well to create a resonating and engaging effect on readers,” (p. 57). Such a synthesis of image and text, she argues, is vital for reaching reluctant readers, many of whom are more dependent on visual texts for the production of meaning (p. 58). Indeed, young adult memoirs are quickly becoming ensconced in a growing movement towards curriculum revision that includes other works of young adult literature in general, largely because they speak polyvocally with voices otherwise marginalized or silenced⁸.

Therefore, of the many ways in which autobiography can be conceptualized, when defining the young adult memoir, I specifically draw from Smith and Watson’s (2008) definition as cited above because it offers the broadest definition of autobiography available. Specifically, it reflects the ways in which young adult memoirs may come in the form of traditional autobiographies (Carson, 1990), non-linear telling (Ginsberg, 2009), the graphic memoir (Spiegelman, 1973; Sartrapi, 2003; Bechdel, 2006), published journals (Gottlieb, 2000), and semi-fictionalized accounts (Alexie, 2008). And though they do not engage with young adult memoirs as a separate genre or a subset of the wider genre of autobiography, as feminist scholars of autobiography, Smith and Watson (2008) particularly focus on ways in which the voice that emerges from the “I” of the autobiography is *not* a unified, cohesive voice of a self-reliant individual (read: white male), but a plurality of voices, sometimes in harmony and sometimes contradictory, that emerge from a single subject who embodies multiple, fragmented identities at any point in time. As feminist scholars, Smith and Watson’s (2008) conception of autobiography

⁸ To date, this is still true, though how accurate it will be in the coming years when the Common Core Curriculum Standards are implemented, remains to be seen.

is compatible with my own definition of the young adult memoir, as it seeks to include voices, such as those of youth, which have previously been marginalized.

In this section, I have discussed the two major areas of educational research and scholarship, reader- response theory and autobiographical studies, into which I situate my work. I now turn to situate my project within some of the extant literature of the rich tradition of using narrative inquiry, specifically autobiographical reflection, within teacher education programs.

Reflective Writing in Teacher Education Programs

Reflective Writing in Teacher Education Programs

Reflective writing, the practice of asking pre-service and in-service teachers to observe themselves and others critically and document these observations in the form of an autobiographical reflective narrative, has been a vital component of teacher education programs for more than a quarter of a century. Various scholars document their use of reflective practices with both pre-service and in-service teachers in order to instigate reform in classroom practice overall (Lortie, 1975; Cazden, 1986;); improve individual teacher classroom practice (Alvine, 2001; Landay, 2001; Bernhardt, 2009); foreground individual pre-service teacher's knowledge and experience (Lortie, 1975; Fenstermacher, 1994; Conle, 1996; Levine-Rasky, 1998; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002); and create occasions for pre-service and in-service teachers to consider the ramifications of their beliefs and practices for students (Aveling 2001; Hoffman-Kipp, et. al. 2003; Phillion & He 2004; Bernhardt, 2009; Parker & Howard, 2009). In this section, I review some of the recent literature that discusses why and how reflective, autobiographical writing in teacher education programs might be used to foment reform in classroom practice and in curricula.

Why reflective practice? The importance of reflective writing in the teacher education programs has been foregrounded at least since the 1975 publication of Dan Lortie's *Schoolteacher*, in which he argues that much of what pre-service teachers know, or think they know, about teaching comes from the (unreflective) experience of being a student and having had many years observing professionals engaged in the practice of teaching. In addition, most of these individuals who enter teacher education programs, this time as student teachers, spend many additional hours observing professional teachers, and based on the experience of being a student and then a student teacher, develop beliefs and practices based on this (largely unreflective) "apprenticeship of observation," (Lortie, 1975). That these beginning teachers practice such taken-for-granted methods out of habit, rather than deliberate choosing, sets the teaching profession apart from other professions, Lortie argues, as non-practitioners would never have such an extensive opportunity to observe professionals at work in other fields. Thus, absent reflective practice, while most pre-service teachers learn quite a bit of educational theorizing in their teacher preparation programs, many of them, when pressed, revert to the teaching practices (regardless of their efficacy) they observed as students and student teachers. As a result, Lortie argues, new teachers enter the profession reproducing many of the teaching habits they observed, some of which are ineffective or worse, destructive, and contribute to the further marginalization of students who are already disenfranchised by the educational system.

While Lortie's *Schoolteacher* (1975) is sociological, focused more on describing the processes by which beginning teachers are socialized into the profession of teaching, his observations regarding the lack of reflective practice have catalyzed subsequent educational theorists and practitioners to argue for and implement reflective writing to be used in teacher education programs.

Following Lortie's (1975) observation, various educational theorists and practitioners have followed suit. For example, Florio-Ruane (2001) echoes Lortie's (1975) concerns in her own study about reflective practice, arguing that "preprofessional knowledge about teaching gained through the media, popular culture, and personal experience as students sometimes can 'militate against change in the profession'" (p. xxvi). Indeed, Florio-Ruane updates Lortie's concept by adding that media and popular culture also play quite a powerful role in creating occasions for "observations," many of which set unreasonable expectations about curriculum content and classroom practice. And while neither Lortie (1975) nor Florio-Ruane (2001) would argue that reflective practice, on its own, creates better teachers, they both maintain that reflective autobiographical inquiry puts teachers in a better position to consider their own teaching beliefs and practices, and imagine how these beliefs and practices might be improved.

Educational scholars and theorists offer various reasons why reflective practices should be included in teacher education programs. For example, for some, reflective autobiographical writing improves individual teaching performance and practice in the classroom. Alvine (2001) sees autobiographical reflective writing as a way for pre-service and in-service teachers to "know what they know" about teaching and to articulate how their prior experiences as students shaped their development and practices as teachers. She argues that in the last decade, the "life histories of teachers have come to be seen as grounded experience for knowledge of teaching," yet pre-service and in-service teachers do not recognize their own lived experience as a source of knowledge (p. 5). She argues that, too often too dependent on scripted curricula and stodgy pedagogies, pre-service and in-service teachers distance themselves from their own experiences as students, which have inexorably shaped the way they approach classroom practice. If they could position themselves as dynamic learners whose own experiences as students have affected

how they understand themselves as present or future teachers, they might be better situated to understand how their classroom practices affect their own students' development as learners and knowers. Therefore, for Alvine (2001), reflective writing is a way to "increase their [pre-service teachers'] knowledge base, to make explicit for themselves knowledge about teaching and learning as they have experienced it" (p. 5) and to "combine intuitive truths and personal experience with theoretical and technical knowledge learned formally in order to develop an integrated view of knowledge" (p. 6). Understanding then, that knowledge encompasses more than what is taught from an official curriculum but is also an accumulation of insights from lived experiences, pre-service and in-service teachers might consider their students more knowledgeable than previously understood.

Likewise, Landay (2001) also implements autobiographical writing so that teachers may "continue their own professional development through study groups and ongoing coursework while developing and maintaining a reflective stance toward their own teaching and learning" (p. 27). Less concerned with teacher identity but focused on classroom practice, Landay argues that pre-service and in-service teachers who engage in reflective practices with one another have the potential to improve their own pedagogical practices. Bernhard (2009) agrees, using autobiographical reflections to create a "curricular space which values and embraces student voice, encourages an ethic of care and understanding between students, and embodies both the lived and living experiences" (p.62). By incorporating less conventional assignments in the classroom, such as autobiographical reflective narratives, Bernhard strives to develop the unique voice of the student-teacher by foregrounding personal development and experience within a larger context of US history and culture.

Other educational theorists and practitioners who use autobiographical reflective writings in their programs do wish to improve classroom practice, but instead of focusing on curriculum and pedagogy, they use reflective narratives as a means to nurture the development of teacher identity by foregrounding the experiential knowledge pre-service teachers already have. For example, Conle (1996) uses narrative work in teacher education programs to help teachers become more aware of their own knowledge processes. She uses the term “resonance” to describe the ways our self development occurs through interactions with others “at an intimate level,” including in teacher education programs (p. 299). For Conle (1996), such resonance can be felt in the acts of writing and sharing autobiographical reflections. “As experiential narratives are shared (and resonance does its work) teachers indirectly shape their practical knowledge. It is important to validate such a process of tacit agency and to declare it as educationally and epistemologically useful” (p. 300). Meaning making for Conle (1996) is a largely social process in which groups, in this case, pre-service and practicing teachers, try out their beliefs and assumptions on each other.

Likewise, Levine-Rasky (1998) argues that reflective writing in teacher education programs is an important component of developing a teacher identity. “Teacher education involves the production of subjectivities,” she argues, “that of new teachers and students,” (p. 89). Seeing teacher candidates as dialectically related to the “social structures that are intertwined with their lives” (p. 89), which often places them at odds with the students they eventually encounter, Levine-Rasky (1998) argues that “without due reflection, application, and contextualization, internalization of values and knowledge about cultural diversity is unlikely to occur for teacher candidates” (p. 90). Like Conle (1996) above, Levine-Rasky (1998) understands reflective writing as a way for teacher candidates to try out various positions they

may take towards students who very often come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

On the other hand, Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) sees reflective writing in teacher education programs as a private, individual process, “a process of making meaning” (p. 406) and a means of “disentangling the ‘authoritative discourse’ . . . from ‘internally persuasive discourses,’ that which is used by individuals and small groups to speak about their own lives and experience,” a discourse which is “denied all privilege and frequently not acknowledged in society” (p. 406). Thus, while Conle (1996) and Levine-Rasky (1998) describe the meaning-making process as largely social, focusing on the ways meanings “resonate” when enacted in groups with others, Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) focuses on reflective writings as a means of distinguishing teachers’ personal knowledges from “official knowledges,” the knowledge of the curriculum, the administration, and curriculum and policy makers as a whole. Nevertheless, while they differ on the degree to which teacher knowledge is social or individual, Conle (1996), Levine-Rasky (1998), and Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) foreground teacher knowledge and identity development as the goal of reflective autobiographical narratives.

Finally, some teacher educators and educational theorists argue that reflective writing not only creates an occasion for pre-service and in-service teachers to articulate their beliefs and practices and integrate their intuitive knowledge with what has been taught to them, but more importantly, reflective writing gives pre-service and in-service teachers the opportunity to consider how these articulated beliefs and practices impact the students with whom they interact on a regular basis. For example, Aveling (2001) draws from critical pedagogy to discuss how “critical storytelling” can “stress the importance in teacher education students to question their own assumptions and let go of the notion that ‘real’ business of schools and education is

grounded in hegemonic (white) cultural norms” (p. 41). Thus, she uses critical storytelling in autobiographical assignments and oral discussions as a “springboard for change” (p. 41) in pre-service teachers’ assumptions about others whose lives are different from their own.

Also drawing from critical pedagogy, Hoffman-Kipp, et. al. (2003) notes that “the link between teacher reflection and learning mediated by various artifacts is not systematically addressed”(p. 248). For Hoffman-Kipp et. al., the traditional view of reflection is limited, and they situate it in a larger process. They argue that “[t]he majority of initial teacher reflection focuses on rule-governed practice, or how practice reflects or conforms to pre-determined criteria” (p. 249). Rather, they note, reflection is embedded in a larger political system that might be addressed rather than ignored. “Reflection that develops a political consciousness might involve teachers integrating curriculum around concepts and issues that would be of current interest to both student and teacher so their students will “not only be problem solvers, but problem posers”(Crawford et. al., quoted p. 248). Of course, Hoffman-Kipp et. al. note that there are limits to this sort of reflection, as teachers often do not explicitly reference educational theory in their reflections. They point out, “Even reflection in which the practitioner becomes owner of...the process of his or her own reflection fails to make explicit how power issues intersect with culture and learning” (p. 249). Thus, the best reflective writing makes use of both pre-service and in-service teachers’ knowledge and situates it in a larger political system that acknowledges that curriculum and pedagogies are politicized, serving the needs of those who determine what knowledges “count” and which are marginalized or discounted, as well as who is allowed to know what.

Like Aveling (2001) and Hoffman-Kipp, et. al (2003), Phillion and He (2004) also draw from critical pedagogy but foreground pre-service and in-service teachers’ lived experience as

the basis for their teacher-knowledge. They argue that reflective writing often brings about the “breakpoint” in multicultural education, that moment when teacher education students who are “initially resistant to ideas of inequality,” such as racial, class-based, or gender inequality, begin to engage with these issues in discussions and in reflective writing” (p. 4). Moreover, Parker and Howard (2009) draw on Phillion and He’s (2004) influential work in narrative inquiry with their own pre-service teachers reflecting on literary life-based narratives, arguing that “intimately engaging in the lives and experiences of individuals who are different from them by reading first-person accounts helps pre-service and practicing teachers question their own identities and experiences by providing models of introspection based on difference” (p.7). Drawing on critical pedagogy, this final group of teacher-educators use autobiographical reflection to change not only classroom practice and curricula and strengthen teacher performance, but to challenge and change pre-service and in-service teachers’ beliefs and assumptions about others at the ideological level. But just as there are myriad reasons why autobiographical reflective writings are used in teacher education programs, there are many different ways these autobiographical reflective writings are used.

How do pre-service and in-service teachers engage in reflective practice?

Autobiographical reflective writings are used in a variety of ways in teacher education programs. After all, while reflective practices following class observations are important, it is just as necessary, if not more, for pre-service teachers to engage in reflective autobiographical writing in order to position themselves as learners whose beliefs about students and education can be challenged and changed. As both Fenstermacher (1994) and Conle (1996) argue, critical, autobiographical reflection is necessary for pre-service (and in-service) teachers to “know what they know,” (Fenstermacher,1994, p. 50). In fact, Fenstermacher (1994) argues, it’s more

important for pre-service teachers to “know what they know” than it is for researchers to know what pre-service teachers know. To one extent, this requires allowing pre-service teachers to engage in more dialogue, not simply passive observation, with one another and with professional educators. For example, Griffin (1991) urges that teacher educators shift from *telling* (in which experts disseminate information) to *talking* (where learning occurs in thoughtful dialogue among professional peers), in order that pre-service teachers might reflect aloud in the presence of others, who might challenge or reaffirm their beliefs about teaching, students, and knowledge. For Griffin (1991), therefore, reflection is not simply personal, it is social.

Nevertheless, inserting the “autobiographical” into reflective practices also requires that pre-service teachers engage in a significant amount of critical, self-reflective writings. To this end, many notable teacher educators have included various types of reflective autobiographical writing practices in teacher education programs in order that pre-service teachers might develop a “teaching self” (Conway, 1998). Indeed, by engaging in the act of reflection by crafting autobiographical narratives, pre-service teachers are able to develop what Phillion and He (2004) call a “narrative identity,” the identity that is created and recreated through acts of autobiographical storytelling. And of course, such recreations of a narrative identity are possible when the narrators are able to examine their own narrations and consider, metacognitively, how they know what they think they know about themselves. “Narratives are key components in the authentic study of teaching, for until we understand the context and appreciate the perspectives of those involved, any understanding of what it means to teach and learn will remain fragmented . . . from the real world of teaching,” Julongo et al. (1995) argue in *Teachers Stories: From Personal Narrative to Professional Insight* (p. 16). In other words, Julongo et al. (1995) argue, autobiographical narratives bridge the gap between what is taught in teacher education programs

and what is believed and practiced by pre-service and in-service teachers. Of course, while autobiographical reflection is no guarantee that pre-service teachers will enter classrooms with a better grasp of content knowledge or pedagogical practice than otherwise; in fact, as Florio-Ruane (2001) and Phillion and He (2004) argue separately, there is always a risk that pre-service teachers will become even more firmly committed to their prejudices and stereotypes about others. Nevertheless, reflection is still a vital component of teacher education programs.

One way that reflective writing can be generated in teacher education programs is through responses to others' life-based narratives. As Florio-Ruane (2001), Phillion and He (2004), and Parker and Howard (2009) demonstrate, reading the literary life-based narratives of others can create the occasion for pre-service teachers to consider their own assumptions about education and the students they will teach, especially the assumptions they make about students from racial, cultural, and class backgrounds different from their own. Writing about the potential to identify these assumptions, Florio-Ruane (2001) argues,

“Absent an examination of our own and others' ...experience, it is difficult to engage. . . the topic of racism. . . . [The] study of culture can be an exercise in mere tolerance. . . . the low-level acceptance of surface feature differences”(p.5).

In other words, for Florio-Ruane (2001), merely reading about other cultures, such as those described in autobiographies, is insufficient. Similar to Hoffman-Kipp, et. al. (2003), Phillion and He (2004), and Parker and Howard (2009), Florio-Ruane argues that change at the ideological level will not occur simply by reading the compelling life narratives of others whose gender, racial, class, and sexual identities and lived experiences sharply differ from one's own. Some form of autobiographical reflection must be incorporated in reading practices that require pre-service teachers to think critically about the assumptions they make about others, challenge (in discussions) the assumptions others are making, and explore the reasons why they make these assumptions. .

While Florio-Ruane's (2001) work with pre-service teachers reading autobiographies, as I will describe below, is notable, it is only the start of a growing trend. In fact, in the last ten years, the number of studies using reflective, autobiographical writings in teacher education programs seems to be increasing. Florio-Ruane's (2001) study looked particularly at how white teachers respond to the stories of cultural and ethnic others by using the autobiography primarily as a pedagogical tool required to introduce these same pre-service teachers to the cultures of many students they would be teaching. Maintaining that "[a]utobiography can be a site of teacher learning about culture," Florio-Ruane asks her participants, "What can we learn from autobiographies? How might they help us imagine our own lives and teaching practice in new and perhaps more powerful ways?" (2001 p. xxii). Meeting with pre-service teachers in her home, Florio-Ruane formed a year-long book club as she and her participants read participant-selected contemporary autobiographies together, discussed their readings, and kept reflective notes and responses in a journal. She used readings of contemporary autobiographies much the same way I have used young adult memoirs: as a springboard for pre-service teachers to consider their own lives, their beliefs, experiences, assumptions, prejudices, while encountering the lives of others, whose life narratives have been constructed in autobiographical texts.

Important for being one of the first, long-term studies using autobiographical writings with pre-service teachers, Florio-Ruane's (2001) study is also notable in its push to place narrative research into a more central role in teacher education programs. She argues, "University classes of education are not known for their 'nurture of narrative,' nor are they characterized by conversation and personal narrative among students. Instead, we teach about teaching- its foundational knowledge and its practice- in decidedly expository ways" (p. 42). Indeed, much of teacher-education courses, both those in theory and those in methods, involve

teacher educators disseminating information to their pre-service teachers, who receive much of this in a passive, non-reflective manner. Thus, Florio-Ruane's critique of teacher-education's dearth of narrative research with undergraduate (and graduate) pre-service teachers is shared by Pinar (1991), Conle (1996), Alvine (2001), Aveling (2001) Elbaz-Luwisch (2002), Phillion and He (2004), and Parker and Howard (2009), whom I will discuss below.

Pinar's (1991) work in *currere* has been an enormously significant contribution to autobiographical reflection in teacher education. Pinar offers a method of *currere* designed for teachers and scholars of education to reflect upon their educational lives, considering how their pasts (both private and shared) have brought them to the place where they currently are, and where they may go forth from the present, which occurs in four steps: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical. For Pinar, *currere* does not occur over a brief period of time but is a recursive process, in which teachers revisit and revise earlier steps multiple times. The purpose of *currere* is for reflecting upon and reconstructing a narrative of one's educational history (regressive), considering possibilities for self-understanding and education (progressive), analyzing the relationships among one's past, present and future autobiography and practice in education (analytical), and imagining new possibilities to conceive of education (synthetical).

Also working with personal reflection, Conle (1996) employed the narrative inquiry methods of Clandinin and Connelly (1991) to engage with four pre-service teachers. Using both oral interviews and journals, Conle worked with the participants individually and as a group to give them the occasion to reflect critically on their student-teaching experiences in the form of storytelling. For Conle, simply the act of relating a narrative, writing a metacommentary about that narrative, and discussing both with a group of others involves the kind of vulnerability

required for change to occur. Often this happens as a domino effect in the process of narrative (re)construction; when one participant shares, the other participants refashion and revise their own narrative identities to accommodate the narrative being told to them. In a process Conle (1996) refers to as resonance, she explains, “When a story reverberated within us and calls forth another in an echo-like fashion, we pull that remembered story out of a previous context and place it into a new one” (Conle, 1996, p. 301). Indeed, it is just this process of story-interaction that Conle argues is the catalyst for critical reflection, discussion, and the possibility of change.

Writing more specifically about literacy, Alvine (2001) has pre-service teachers write literacy narratives, short autobiographical pieces that describe one’s own literacy development, that position themselves as readers and learners. She then uses excerpts of these literacy narratives and meta-narratives to demonstrate that using autobiography in teacher education courses helps pre-service teachers evaluate how they came to be learners and knowers. An English educator, Alvine (2001) argues that the practice requiring her pre-service English teachers to write literacy narratives gives them occasions to consider the factors, both personal and social, that shaped their own literacy development and to take seriously the ways that their various positions of privilege (gender, race, class, or language) aided their early learning experiences.

Focusing more on both the oral and written methods of autobiographical reflection, Aveling (2001) works within an anti-racism framework and uses critical storytelling, which requires a great deal of reflection in order to generate a verbal performance, to model “ways in which students can critically analyze their own lives and assumptions about the meaning of whiteness” (p. 41). She then invites students to write their own accounts and share them, using the same methods of reflection to generate a written, rather than verbal autobiographical account.

Aveling's research has shown, through narrative, that the knowledge pre-service teachers gained about themselves through that process has prepared them to challenge racist remarks made in their classrooms and in casual conversation, even outside the context of education.

Also using storytelling in her teacher-education courses, Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) argues that "autobiographic writing is being used in teacher education and development much more than is being written about. It may be....something of a 'secret story' among teacher educators" (p. 408). Her research with pre-service teachers who wrote educational autobiographies of various sorts looks at how teachers "narratively construct their own development" as well as how "the setting of a university function(s) as a setting for storytelling" (p. 409). Thus, she addresses how these educational autobiographies function as reflective pieces valuable for teacher education and development.

In an influential piece that may be considered foundational for contemporary reflective writing in teacher education, Phillion and He (2004) use life-based narratives to help students "develop the imaginative capacity to relate to those different from themselves" (p. 4). Drawing on Greene's (1995) work in literary imagination, that which "makes empathy possible," (quoted on p. 4), Phillion and He's focus was on the power of narrative to assist students' efforts to "increase knowledge of the ways diverse students experience the world" (p. 4). In this study, pre-service teachers were required to engage in self-examination and reflect on their backgrounds and experiences to critically examine their beliefs and develop understandings of the ways their "personal histories, cultures, and experiences affected who they are, how they interact with others, and how they perceive the world" (p. 4). Using multiple sources of data gathered after pre-service teachers read literary-based life narratives of others, Phillion and He (2004) required pre-service teachers to write autobiographical papers, reflective journals in

response to theoretical readings, narrative imagination papers to reflect on the life-based narrative readings, and a collaborative project in order to create multi-occasioned, multi-dimensional ways for pre-service teachers to engage in autobiographical reflective writing to consider their responses to others' autobiographies.

In a study with a similar design, Parker and Howard (2009) draw on Phillion and He (2004), also using life-based literary narratives with pre-service teachers to give them opportunities to encounter the intimate lives of those in different class backgrounds from theirs. "Because our teacher education undergraduate students have few, if any, opportunities to interact with students with backgrounds different from their own. . . . [this] is one method of engaging in the lives of diverse and often underrepresented others" (p. 7). Particularly, Parker and Howard (2009) use autobiographical accounts of individuals from working-class backgrounds because, as Parker and Howard (2009) argue, the use of autobiographical narratives can reach readers at an emotional level that theoretical readings cannot, particularly, in this case, in addressing issues of social and class difference.

Indeed, reflective writing is used in multiple ways in teacher education programs. Some autobiographical reflective narratives are generated without a focused prompt (Conle, 1996; Aveling, 2001); some are generated through journal-keeping (Landay, 2001; Hoffman-Kipp, et. al., 2003; Bernhardt, 2009); some are generated through autobiographical literacy narratives (Alvine, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002); and finally, and most pertinent to my own study, some are responses to other life-based narratives (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Phillion & He, 2004; Parker & Howard, 2009). In fact, as I have argued earlier, this latter way that autobiographical reflective writings are generated and used most closely resembles the project that I propose. In the

following section, I shall discuss what I understand is missing in the extant literature on autobiographical reflective writings.

What is missing from autobiographical reflective writings in teacher education? In the above sections I have established a rich tradition of autobiographical reflective writing in teacher education programs. To summarize, whether it is to instigate reform in classroom practice overall (Lortie, 1975; Cazden, 1986), improve individual teacher classroom practice (Alvine, 2001; Landay, 2001; Bernhardt, 2009), foreground individual pre-service teacher's knowledge and experience (Lortie, 1975; Fenstermacher, 1994; Conle, 1996; Levine-Resky, 1998; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002), or to create occasions for pre-service and in-service teachers to consider the ramifications of their beliefs and practices for students (Aveling, 2001; Hoffman-Kipp, et. al., 2003; Phillion & He, 2004; Bernhardt, 2009; Parker & Howard, 2009), autobiographical reflective writings have been used in teacher education programs for various purposes and in various ways, but the point of all practices is to facilitate ways for pre-service and in-service teachers to become reflective practitioners who use careful deliberation to plan curriculum content and pedagogical practices in their classrooms, and to use compassion and care in their interactions with students.

Nevertheless, while most studies draw on critical pedagogy to facilitate pre-service and in-service teachers' understanding of the students they will teach, and to foreground pre-service and in-service teachers' own beliefs and practices with regards to their students, only a few teacher educators (Conle, 1996; Alvine, 2001) are using reflective writings for the specific purpose of developing teacher identity in its own right, and only a very few draw from reader-response theories to do so. Indeed, using published autobiographies as sites of identity development remains a relatively open territory for teacher educators and educational researchers

to explore. That is, even though responding to a life-based literary narrative has been a reflective writing practice (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Phillion & He, 2003; Parker & Howard, 2004), few studies, if any, have asked pre-service teachers to respond directly to a literary text in the manner that Sumara (2001) demonstrated and I have replicated. Furthermore, few studies, if any, ask pre-service teachers to inscribe reflective writings within autobiographical literary texts (memoirs, autobiographies, journals, and the like) as they read and track their changing assumptions, questions, and understandings about the text.

Certainly, it must be pointed out that the studies I cited above, including Florio-Ruane (2001), Phillion and He (2004), and Parker and Howard (2009), are noteworthy for their use of published autobiographies in teacher education programs. However, as I also argued, these studies draw from critical pedagogy and use the published autobiographical texts as tools to springboard further autobiographical narratives of social difference. They are not designed to ask the pre-service teacher participants to think relationally about the subjects constructed in these texts; nor are they designed to ask pre-service teachers to consider how their lived experiences may (or may not) intersect with the lived experiences described in these texts. Certainly, they are not designed to ask pre-service teachers to track the ways their responses to these texts may change over time (often after several readings), and to reflect upon why that might happen.

Therefore, I argue that what is missing from the tradition of using reflective autobiographical writing in teacher education programs is a conceptualization of autobiographical narratives as potential sites where teacher identity development may occur, as pre-service teachers read about the lives of others and, in response, sometimes even reconfigure their own identities in light of the new insights and understandings they may have encountered

(what Conle 1996 refers to as “resonance”). I drew on reader-response theory, particularly Sumara’s (2003) notion of the embodied reader, to understand how individual readers, in this case, pre-service teachers, create multiple meanings with texts, across multiple readings and contexts, as I developed a Commonplace Book with pre-service and in-service teachers. Furthermore, I argue that such a reflective practice method used by pre-service teachers can be transferred to a pedagogical practice these same pre-service and in-service teachers may use with their current and future students.

Book Groups as Sites of Teacher Reflection

In the previous section, I have discussed autobiographical reflection in teacher education programs mainly as it occurs in written reflections. As my study uses a particular form of written reflections, those taking place in the actual texts we read, or what Sumara (2002) calls the Commonplace Book, it is necessary that I situate this study among a long tradition of autobiographical reflective writing. But a great deal of reflection was also done socially, in the book group meetings we attended together. As such, before I move to the next chapter, I wish to pause and briefly review the use of book groups in teacher education and teacher-research programs.

In the last ten years, book groups have been gaining popularity for their use in teacher education research. Since Florio-Ruane’s (2001) book club discussed above, a number of researchers have used book groups to introduce previously-underused genres to teachers and preservice teachers (Durand, 2012), to get teachers to merge reading for pleasure with reading for pedagogical practice (Goldberg & Pesko, 2000), and to get teachers to reflect autobiographically on their roles as teachers (Halsey, et al., 2008; Bennett, 2003), mainly because book groups lend themselves to various sorts of responses. For the purposes of this

study, I am interested in a variety of responses: personal stories, aesthetic responses, pedagogical strategies, and teaching stories, among others, to which a book club lends itself, generating in a spontaneous, organic way. In particular, the teachers' stories generated through book group sharing are, according to narrative researchers Jalongo and Isenberg (1995), "central to the type of inquiry and reflection that lead to professional development and personal insight," (p. xvii). Using book group format, Jalongo and Isenberg seek teacher's narratives primarily because they argue that "it is in the narrative mode that teachers consider daily dilemmas, examine their motives and misgivings, savor their successes, and anguish over their failures" (xvii). Indeed, several studies have emerged demonstrating the potential for book groups to be used in pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development.

Goldberg and Pesko (2000) use the book club for professional development as teachers move from viewing reading as a "set of skills to be mastered," in which "meaning comes only from the text," to seeing that both reader and context also contribute to meaning" (p. 40). As book clubs facilitate new ways of teaching and promote higher-order thinking, they also allow teachers to reconnect with "the kind of reading interactions they envision for students" (p. 41). Goldberg and Pesko (2000) argue that, as teachers become used to teaching comprehension skills and ask literary analysis and content-based, rather than personal connection-type questions, they potentially lose touch with their own previous ways of reading simply for pleasure. They argue that,

[r]e-authentication places the adult learner in the position of experiencing pleasure reading, this time with metacognitive awareness. In some cases this activity calls up old memories; in others, the experience replaces, or at least affects, earlier negative encounters with reading (p. 39).

Thus, using book clubs as part of an on-going teachers' professional development series allows literacy teachers to rethink literacy strategies and consider using more student-centered

approaches to reading and learning, along the lines of Atwell's (1998) book groups and Faust, et. al. (2005) student book clubs.

Other scholars have used the book club approach to professional development in order to improve rapport among teachers and between teachers and administrations. For example, Welch (2000) found that book club discussions generated discussions that were scholarly and theoretical on the practice of teaching, as well as intimate and personal, and those latter responses helped inspire further discussion into the topic the book discussed. Likewise, Halsey, et. al. (2008) used book clubs to help teachers "recognize the power of their own leadership abilities" (p. 1). Using an interdisciplinary group of participants to establish a "community of learners" across disciplinary and administrative lines, they found that professional development book clubs "allow teachers to interact with one another, hear different perspectives, and become a community of learners," calling themselves a "network of support" (www.naesp.org/resources/2/Middle_Matters).

This is not to say that book clubs are always successful ways to implement change, facilitate growth, or initiate new pedagogical strategies. For example, Bennett and Schulke's (2003) work with in-service teachers in anti-racist approaches to close the Black-White achievement gap brought about mixed results, as some teachers' prejudices were strengthened, though others seized upon the opportunity to reconsider their beliefs and practices in the classroom. Likewise, Hall (2009) used book clubs in a literacy methods class to understand how elementary teachers saw themselves as literacy teachers, hoping that they might "transform their visions to include culturally responsive teaching. . . and create spaces for struggling readers and writers to grow" (p. 300). She found that while book clubs generated considerable enthusiasm,

teachers remained in conflict between achieving their visions and crafting a professional identity consistent with following the pedagogical practices demanded of them.

Nevertheless, the research on book clubs as on-going educational research is still relatively new, and as researchers achieve successes and failures, new ways of implementing and maintaining book clubs are continually emerging. In the next chapter, I shall discuss the use of the Commonplace Book used in a book club as part of a narrative study with pre-service and in-service teachers reading young adult memoirs.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe a study that uses the Commonplace Book strategy with in-service and pre-service teachers in order to examine the larger implications of reading and re-reading young adult memoirs in the secondary education classroom. In a book club setting, three in-service teachers and two pre-service teachers, all enrolled in either an undergraduate or graduate program in education, and I, as participant-researcher, read and re-read three young adult memoirs of their choosing (from a short list that I provided, attached in the appendix). In six group sessions, we met together to discuss our responses to the readings, which we recorded in the texts of the books. We also met individually to elaborate upon and discuss their responses to the other participants' interpretations that emerged. To reiterate from Chapter One, the purpose of my study was to examine how teachers discuss young adult memoirs, what they might learn about themselves in the process of reading and reflecting in book discussions and in a Commonplace Book they kept, and how they might use young adult memoirs in classrooms including, but not limited to English language arts (ELA) classrooms. Again, from Chapter One, my research questions for this narrative study are as follows:

1. What types of stories do in-service and pre-service teachers tell about themselves when they engage with young adult memoirs?
2. How do the participants' aesthetic responses to the text, in the book discussions and in the Commonplace Books, compare to the ways they talk about using young adult memoirs in their own future classrooms?
3. What might teachers learn about themselves as readers from and through the process of reading and re-reading texts and keeping their responses in Commonplace Books?

Rationale

In Chapter Two, I argued that, while early reader-response theories may no longer be used by many literary critics, the reader-response methods they inspire create a useful occasion to engage in narrative inquiry, as teacher-readers often respond to texts by telling and writing

autobiographical narratives of their own. Moreover, the stories of lived experience that teachers tell about themselves often manifest as metaphors for the ways they approach curriculum and classroom practice, which have a direct effect on students. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999; Quintaro, 1997). Therefore, I chose narrative inquiry as the methodology as I designed and approached my study. In this section, I will discuss my rationale for this choice.

Narrative inquiry refers to a collection of research and analysis methods that values, as a legitimate source of knowledge, the stories that individuals tell themselves and others about their lives, that considers these stories and their interpretations as meaningful knowledge in education and other social sciences, and that understands “narrative” as “both phenomena under study and method of study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3-4). Differing from other methodologies in its tendency to be participant, not researcher driven, narrative inquiry is defined as “a *collaboration* between researcher and the participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20, added emphasis). After all, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue, these “stories lived and told educate the self and others” (p. xxvi). And as I used this particular study design as a way to facilitate pre-service and in-service teachers’ discussions of an under-used genre of young adult literature, it is just this “educat[ion] [of] the [teaching] self” that I am particularly interested in achieving.

As opposed to quantitative methods of inquiry and even more tightly structured qualitative methods, narrative inquiry “examines lived experience which cannot be reduced to measured responses” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.ii), running counter to the kind of Thorndikian behaviorism so prevalent in No Child Left Behind (NCLB)-funded research, which reduces participant input into decontextualized short answer or multiple-choice responses.

Therefore, narrative inquirers must be prepared for unexpected responses and must embrace the messy, vague, and unscripted nature of storytelling, understanding that stories can be told in multiple ways depending on local context, audience, and manner in which they were elicited (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Maynes et al., 2008; Riessman, 2008).

Indeed, narrative inquiry, unlike other methods of research, allows and expects the participants' stories to change with various tellings and in various contexts; for the focus and emotional intensity to shift; and for plot events and characters to fade in and out of significance. After all, just as identities are fluid, so are the narratives that construct them, which is why issues of validity are often less important for narrative inquirers than they are in other methodologies. Unlike other methods, narrative inquiry allows for all these versions of a narrative, if not to be equally valid, at least to contain a personal truth for the teller. Moreover, most narrative inquirers agree that stories do not speak for themselves; interpretation by both participant and analyst is required, though there may always be a sense of uncertainty about an event's interpretation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Maynes et al., 2008; Riessman, 2008), and participant and inquirer may disagree over the various ways in which a given narrative may be interpreted, analyzed, and represented.

In addition, especially for researchers Maynes et al. (2008), narrative construction can often be considered a form of identity construction. For these authors in particular, narrative inquiry "emphasizes the narrative dimensions of selfhood. . . [and] its construction through culturally embedded narrative forms that . . . shape both life stories and lives" (p. 2). Narrative inquirers conceptualize human experience as being organized primarily in narrative form, arguing that narratives can be found almost everywhere, including, but not limited to, journals, personal narratives, art, historical documents, financial records, wills, memoirs, films, and

photographs (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Eakin, 2008; Maynes et al., 2008). To that end, I argue that narratives may also be generated through an examination of readers' responses to literature, as in my specific study, both in their oral responses in book discussions with the other participants, and individually, as generated in their interviews and as recorded in their *Commonplace Books*.

For the purpose of my particular study, which was informed heavily by reader-response methods of having readers openly and freely respond to a text in writing and in discussion, a number of methodologies might have been used to collect and analyze the data generated by these responses. However, as with researcher Catherine Riessman, I argue that narrative inquiry allows for both the collection and analysis to be more participant-driven than other methods; moreover, narrative inquiry keeps the participants' full narratives intact rather than parsing them into smaller thematic units of analysis (Riessman, 2008). This last point is significant as it gestures towards an "epistemological strategy" that sees individual narratives as unique, while it simultaneously understands them as embedded in larger cultural and historical narratives (Maynes et al., 2008). As an inquirer, I was interested in the stories pre-service and in-service teachers tell about themselves when they read other life narratives, especially coming-of-age life narratives; thus, my goal was to provide an occasion for the participants to tell those stories specifically during the time they were theorizing about pedagogical practices in their own present and future secondary education classrooms. Narrative inquiry methods of narrative generation, collection, analysis, and representation best facilitate the keeping of those stories intact and allow for the telling of those stories to be determined not only by the inquirer, but also by the participants. As such, I found narrative inquiry to be the best methodology to use with

pre-service and in-service teachers in order for them to generate and reflect upon their own narratives of experience and identity.

Narrative Method

Commonplace Books with Young Adult Memoirs

In terms of design, my study closely resembles the pedagogical method of keeping a Commonplace Book that Sumara (2002) proposed, as described at length in Chapter Two, except that, where Sumara used a fictional novel, I asked the participants to read young adult memoirs, inscribing into the text of these memoirs the thoughts, feelings, predictions, and associations they made as they read and re-read the books. I chose YA memoirs for three reasons. First, as I have argued previously, the YA memoir is an underused genre in school curricula (Kirby & Kirby, 2010), including, but not limited to ELA classrooms (though its use is growing) and often offers a much more accessible form of the autobiography than canonized, traditional versions of the genre that are currently being assigned. Both in language and in content, the YA memoir is far more accessible for pre-service and in-service teachers and their students, thus better facilitating their readiness and willingness to find where the narratives in the text intersect with their own.

Secondly, the YA memoir focuses far more on the coming-of-age narrative of adolescence, complicating rather than oversimplifying the typical narratives of adolescence in which many pre-service and in-service teachers likely found themselves caught. To this end, the participants will have more sophisticated and complex narratives of adolescence on which they may reflect as they consider how their own lives intersect with the lives of the individuals in the texts.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, because most of the participants, as former students, were likely taught to read memoirs (and other forms of the autobiography) as

nonfiction works (which is how most libraries classify them), the YA memoir, as opposed to fictional YA texts, offers participants the opportunity to respond to the more-or-less true accounts of actual individuals, rather than fictional characters, many of whom can capture aspects of lived experiences that fictional characters cannot. And even when readers discuss the constructed nature of memoirs, acknowledging that there are various degrees of objective, verifiable truth that can be found in any given memoir, Lejeune's concept of the *autobiographical pact* (Maynes et al., 2008), in which most readers expect a degree of factuality and truthfulness in memoir that they would not expect in fiction, demonstrates that readers have expectations of memoir and autobiography different from those that they have for fiction, thus influencing how they respond differently to these works.

Participant Selection

Selection criteria included the requirement that the participants be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program in education. Full-time, professional teaching experience, while valuable, was not a necessary requirement, as the student-teaching experience of pre-service teachers gave them some experience in terms of curriculum planning and classroom practice, and the methods courses gave them opportunities to theorize about their own future classrooms. Participant selection also required that the participants have a willingness to commit to reading and re-reading at least two memoirs and keeping record of their responses. Therefore, for this study, I used both convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods to recruit the participants. First, I sent letters of inquiry to former students enrolled in college elective courses I had taught as well as to students enrolled in English education courses and adolescent fiction courses, seeking possible education majors. When a sufficient number of participants was still not met, I contacted several doctoral students I knew personally, inquiring whether they might

recommend potential participants, and selected from among those recommendations individuals who would represent a variety of gender, racial, economic, and teaching backgrounds.

The Participants' Profiles

Two pre-service and three in-service teachers agreed to participate in this study, representing a variety of backgrounds in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, religious affiliation, and region, and they brought with them to the study different motivations for participating in it. In this section I offer a brief biography of their teaching experiences and reasons for participating in this study.

Chad (pre-service): Chad is the youngest of the participants and the only one with no prior teaching or student-teaching experience. As a second- year English major, Chad plans to teach English literature at the high school or college level. I have known Chad for several years prior to the study. Chad had previously founded a school paper his junior year of high school in an after-school journalism club that I sponsored at a nearby high school; and during his freshman year of college, he enrolled in a Women's and Gender Studies course I was teaching. A college sophomore at the time of the study, Chad entered the study based on his interest in teaching and working with LGBTQ youth, as well as his interest in journalism and desire to write creative nonfiction. As indicated in his pre-study survey and in several book discussions, Chad had never before read any young adult memoirs, but he quickly made the distinction between the first text we read and the traditional autobiographical excerpts he had encountered as a secondary education student. In book discussions, Chad drew on his still-recent experience as a high school student and often imagined how he may have responded to these texts had he read them during his own secondary educational experience as a student. Chad only partially completed the study, citing other academic obligations and pressures as the reasons he was unable to attend three of

the book discussions (Personal Interview, 17 May, 2013). His narratives remain part of this study, however, for several reasons. First, Chad was present at the meeting in which the initial books were selected. Second, as the only male, Chad's perspective adds a richer dimension to the narrative study, as a whole. Finally, participant withdrawal is not uncommon in book clubs (Durand, 2012), and as such, Chad's inability to complete the study is not unusual.

Lucy (pre-service): I met Lucy, a master's student completing her MAT in English education, the semester she participated in this study. An avid reader of fantasy fiction and historical fiction, on her pre-study survey, Lucy shared that she had read few biographies and autobiographies during her high school experience and had not read any young adult memoirs or young adult autobiographical writings in general, save for *The Diary of Anne Frank*. She was fascinated that there were books in the genre that were written specifically for adolescents and had responded to the recruitment emails for that very reason. Having "not internalized 'teacher' yet," as she shared with the group, Lucy was also interested in a small-group setting in which she could discuss her reactions as a reader as well as her experiences with student teaching with other teachers in an academic, yet informal (non-evaluative) setting (Meeting Two, 2/20/13). During the study, Lucy demonstrated considerable interest in several of the critical/theoretical topics that were broached, wishing to read more memoirs and critical memoirs similar to those we read. Lucy also embraced the Commonplace Book method with great enthusiasm, keeping more detailed notes in her texts than her fellow participants, and later indicated her interest in continuing the process as an alternative to conventional journaling. At the end of the study, Lucy revealed to me that she had decided not to pursue classroom teaching but planned to return to graduate school in English or library science (Personal Interview, 5/16/13).

Hannah (in-service): Hannah is a fifth-year social studies teacher in an elementary school in a small, top-ranked community school district. Having spent much of her childhood abroad during which her father would bring back suitcases full of books from the US, Hannah is also an avid reader, and following the study, began to explore using young adult literature in her own classroom. Currently working on her doctorate in social studies education, I met Hannah the previous semester when she hired me as a copy editor to proofread her general exam materials; a few months later, she interviewed my father as part of her own research. During the semester she participated in the study, Hannah was teaching second grade, but during the study, she was hired to teach fourth-grade reading and language arts at a charter school. Hannah entered the study interested in cross-curricular approaches to teaching young adult novels and memoirs and particularly wished to use them as prompts for writing assignments. Prior to the study, Hannah indicated that she had never read a young adult memoir; in fact, it was not until the study was complete that Hannah articulated that she saw a distinction between young adult and adult texts. Nevertheless, following the study, Hannah revealed to me that she was exploring other memoirs besides the three we read in the study, for possible use in her classroom.

Lauren (in-service): Lauren spent several years teaching elementary and middle school before entering a doctoral program in reading. As a researcher, she is interested in reader-response theories, particularly the intertextual possibilities of teaching memoirs, as students draw on textbook readings of historical moments to understand the historical context of memoirs. I met Lauren the night the study began and came to know her because she was often the last participant to leave the book club, and we would walk to our vehicles together while she confided in me “off the record.” Soft-spoken and less open to speaking in groups, Lauren often emailed me lengthy personal narratives following each book group meeting. Unable to be

physically present at the last meeting, Lauren participated in the final book discussion via conference call.

Taylor (in-service): Taylor is a self-described “accidental teacher” whom I have known for several years as a colleague in the College of Education. Coming from a background in social work, Taylor has taught special education classes with students of various ages and with various levels of ability, and as part of her graduate assistantship, she has supervised pre-service teachers enrolled in a graduate teacher education program. She entered the study based on her love for young adult literature and her interest in using young adult texts with struggling and/or reluctant readers, both in the classroom context and in a counseling context. Indeed, on her pre-study survey, Taylor indicated that she had read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Angelou, 1969) and *Gifted Hands* (Carson 1990), so she had some previous experience with the types of texts we would encounter in the study. At the time of the study, Taylor was writing her dissertation on the usage of spoken-word poetry, particularly by Black female poets, in the classroom. She expects to complete her doctorate in the fall semester of 2013.

Heather (researcher): As the participant-researcher of the group, I came to the study already knowing three of the participants, Chad, Taylor, and Hannah, in professional or classroom contexts. Having taught English literature in secondary education for ten years, I felt comfortable with the use of informal book discussions in small groups, and I had many years of experience from which to draw when discussing potential pedagogical uses of the books. Moreover, having attended the university in which the study took place as an undergraduate and a graduate student, I entered the study feeling comfortable discussing my reactions to literature and sharing stories about myself and my family with others, even in an academic context. I had also spent the last three years, prior to the study, reading as many young adult memoirs as I could

find in our parish libraries, in school curricula lists, and in scholarly literature. A complete list of these titles can be found in Appendix A.

Text Selection

Before the first meeting, the participants were emailed a list of ten possible YA memoirs I had generated from a list of more than thirty that I had read over the past two years. I narrowed down my initial reading list to ten books in order to facilitate selection, but I wished to include only books written within the past 20 years, those less than 250 pages long, and, for the sake of minimizing factors that might influence interpretation, those that were text-only (which unfortunately excluded a number of excellent graphic memoirs, such as *Persepolis* (Sartrapi, 2003), *Maus I* (Spiegelman, 1973) *Maus II* (Spiegelman, 1973), and *Fun Home* (Bechdel, 2006). I also wished to include texts by authors representing diverse backgrounds in terms of race, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity; therefore I asked the participants to consider including both male and female authors, or both white authors and authors of color, when making their final text selections. At the introductory meeting, the participants voted on two YA memoirs they would read twice, respond to in the form of a Commonplace Book, and discuss openly in a book-club like forum. After we completed our discussions of the second memoir, several of the participants vocalized their desire to read a third selection, so I emailed the original list to them and asked them to choose a third title.

The Texts

The two texts that were initially chosen were *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos (2002) and *Wasted* by Marya Hornbacher (1997). After reading the second text (*Wasted*), several of the participants vocalized their desire to read a third, *FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code* by Maura Conlon-McIvor (2004). Other than being young adult memoirs and meeting the

criteria I outlined in chapter two and in the previous section, these texts have little in common; thus they will be discussed separately in this chapter and in Chapter Four. In this section, I offer a brief synopsis of each text.

Hole in My Life: In his memoir *Hole in My Life*, young adult author Jack Gantos describes a year of his life in which he was incarcerated in a state penitentiary for his involvement in drug trafficking in the 1970's as an eighteen-year-old young man. While in prison, Gantos kept a journal that he inscribed in the text of a literary classic (Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*) which he had borrowed from the prison library. This journal, he claims, fueled his desire to become a writer and enabled him the time and opportunity to hone his craft. Gantos describes a relatively mild prison experience; rather than experiencing any physical violence common in prisons, Gantos was able to work as an x-ray assistant, gaining the trust of many of his fellow inmates as well as that of the warden. He credits his fortunate assignment in the infirmary, as well as his dedication to writing and journaling, to his shortened prison sentence. Following his release from prison, Gantos enrolled in, and graduated from, college, becoming a well-known author of fiction for children and young adults. The true "hole," as the book club participants pointed out, was not the year he spent in prison—for that was the year that he found his voice as a writer—but the year leading up to his imprisonment in which he "wasted" much of his youth and education through his participation in the drug culture. Gritty at times though still well-suited for adolescent audiences, *Hole in My Life* extols the value of education's role in granting second chances, and the role that journaling played as he reflected on his identity as an incarcerated man.

Wasted. *Wasted* depicts an eight-year period of journalist and author Marya Hornbacher's life in which she coped with both anorexia nervosa and bulimia while still a young student at boarding

school, from which, sadly, she has never fully recovered. The only child of two rather dysfunctional professional actors, Hornbacher describes a childhood in which she was often either left alone or treated as a pawn in her parents' on-going competition to dominate the other. By early adolescence, Hornbacher claims she had a full-on eating disorder, and was already experimenting with drugs and engaging in casual sex, often with strangers. Blunt, graphic, angry in tone and heavy-handed with profanity, *Wasted* was the most troubling text for the participants of the book group, both for its frank discussions of eating disorders as a cultural pathology, not an individual pathology, and for its heavy usage of profanity and its passages depicting casual sex and drug abuse. Also a controversial text, *Wasted* has been removed from some district school libraries for the reasons cited above.

FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code. *FBI Girl* was the most positively-received text we read in this study. Set in the 1960's, *FBI Girl* describes Maura Conlon-McIvor's coming-of-age in a large, Irish-Catholic family. Following the birth of her brother who had Down syndrome, Conlon-McIvor's father, a real-life FBI agent, became increasingly withdrawn and emotionally inaccessible, largely due to the backlash and lack of support his family received after refusing to institute their young son. As Agent Conlon turned his attentions away from his older children and hyperfocused on his youngest child, his marriage began to deteriorate, and his wife resolutely determined to save it. Conlon-McIvor, however, imagines her father's depression is the result of fatigue from high-speed car chases and criminal caper-solving, and she sets about mending their strained relationship. With nostalgic, but not overly sentimental depictions of life with a family member with a cognitive impairment, *FBI Girl* resonated the most with the participants with a background in special education and elicited from the participants several narratives of their own, concerning family life and family silences.

Narrative Collection

First, before I discuss at length my methods of narrative collection, I should point out that other forms of qualitative inquiry and analysis might refer to this and the following sections as “data collection and data analysis.” However, as with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Riesman (2008), I have avoided the use of the term “data” and instead use the term “narrative” in its place, in order to honor the changing, constantly-in-flux and participatory nature of narrative inquiry and analysis. In other words, “data” is much too static a term, and much too embedded in scientific discourses of objectivity and absolutism to describe the interactions and end products of narrative inquiry. In narrative inquiry, data are not collected as objects for an inquirer to place under scrutiny; rather, narratives of lived experience, situated in historical, cultural, and local contexts, are generated in a give-and-take exchange with a researcher, and are subject to change with each telling.

In the following sections, I shall describe at length the process of collecting narratives during the book club discussions and individual meetings. Following, however, is Table 1 documenting the timeline during which the study took place.

Table 1 Timeline of Data Collection

Month	Portion of study completed:
January	Introductory session
February	First reading of <i>Hole in My Life</i>
March	First reading of <i>Wasted</i> ;
April	Second reading of <i>Hole in My Life</i>
May	Second reading of <i>Wasted</i> ; Reading of <i>FBI Girl</i> , Individual interviews conducted.

The Introductory Session

At this initial meeting, I reviewed the design of the study with the participants as well as my own research involvement in it, explaining how a narrative study would work, and encouraged them to ask any questions they may have had. I emphasized the need to keep conversations as well as the identities of the other participants confidential, and also discussed the need for them to choose pseudonyms in order to maintain their own anonymity. Finally, I reminded them that they were able to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions, and that they would be able to review discussion transcripts and modify or retract any comments that they wished not to be used in the final data analysis and presentation as such. Before selecting the young adult memoirs, I offered the participants a brief, open-ended questionnaire in order to establish a basic understanding of the participants' familiarity with young adult texts, familiarity with autobiographies, and reading and interpretation habits in general. The questions I asked are as follows:

1. What autobiographies and memoirs have you read (even if only in excerpt), particularly in school? Which have you taught?
2. When you read an autobiography or memoir, how much truth do you expect it to include?
3. When you read a literary text, how many interpretations do you expect the text to have? Who do you think is authorized to make correct interpretations?
4. When you read a memoir or work of fiction, do you find yourself comparing your own life to the life of the subject/character being portrayed? If so, how does this affect your response to the work?
5. As a teacher, would you consider reading Young Adult novels and memoirs with your students?

After selecting the initial two young adult memoirs (*Hole in My Life* and *Wasted*), the participants signed informed consent documents in which they were apprised of the risks and

benefits of participating in such a study. Finally, they were once again reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty.

Book Club Discussions

After explaining Sumara's (2002) use of the Commonplace Book, the participants were asked to read the selected book in full before each meeting, writing in its pages of the books their impressions, questions, feelings, experiences, and memories evoked by the reading of the texts. The participants who did not wish to write in the texts themselves used post-it notes instead. Not counting the introductory meeting, there were five book discussion meetings total. At each meeting, the participants brought their Commonplace Books with them and were invited to share with one another their responses to the texts. Meetings were conducted in an informal manner, with the participants leading the discussion once I, as researcher-participant, opened the discussion with a general question about the book. As both participant and observer, I as inquirer read the texts and kept a Commonplace Book of my own for each book that we read, and I participated in the discussion along with the participants. The participants chose what passages they were willing to respond to and which they preferred not to discuss, and they also determined the length of the book discussions. Typically, each of the six meetings lasted between one hour and one hour and fifteen minutes.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative inquiry does not begin with research questions that are set in stone; research questions emerge as narratives are generated between inquirer and participant. While I began each book discussion with a general question such as, "What did you think about the book?" the participants guided the discussion and asked follow-up questions of one another. When conversation waned, however, I inserted general questions for discussion such as the following:

- How do your own experiences differ from the autobiographer's?
- How does this particular text remind you of your own experience as a student?
- How might you engage with this text if you read it with students in your classroom?"

I concluded each discussion by offering the participants the opportunity to discuss the pedagogical possibilities of using the text in their own future classrooms, especially as I asked the participants to reflect upon their own experiences as students and consider the kinds of texts they studied in the classroom.

The Commonplace Book

Supplementing the oral narratives the participants offered during book discussions, the participants also kept shorter, written accounts of their narratives in the margins of the texts they read, which Dennis Sumara (2002) referred to as Commonplace Books. The participants were encouraged to write in the text and in the margins of the books the thoughts, feelings, predictions, and associations they made as they read. These physical artifacts constitute what Maynes et al. (2008) refer to as "personal narrative sources," which can be analyzed along with the transcriptions of the book club discussions. One participant who was initially uncomfortable writing in the books was given post-it notes to use instead. The participants were encouraged to use multiple ink colors in order to designate different sorts of responses or different times of response. At the final discussion meeting, the Commonplace Books were returned to me for my analysis and later, archived in a locked file cabinet.

Follow-up Interviews

Following the collection of the Commonplace Books, I conducted semi-structured follow-up interviews, ranging between 25 and 50 minutes, in which I met with the participants individually in locations of their choosing. To prepare for these meetings, I reviewed the

transcripts of the book discussions and prepared various follow-up questions that I wished to ask the participants. Here, each participant had the opportunity to voice any additional versions of previous narratives or add new ones, and also the opportunity to delete any previous narratives he or she wished not to contribute. Unlike the informal nature of the open-ended group discussions, these follow-up meetings were more structured. As with all other meetings, these follow-up interviews were also recorded and transcribed.

The Commonplace Books, discussion transcripts and follow-up interview transcripts are what Clandinin and Connelly (2008) call “field texts,” which “preserve the integrity of the project” and “help the researcher maintain enough distance from the participants as not to lose him/herself in the project completely” [sic](p. 82). Field texts helped preserve my original account and save it from misrepresentation due to lapses in memory. But Commonplace Books, discussions, and interview transcripts could not capture all the nuances of inquirer-participant interaction. Thus, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend that the inquirer maintain a field journal in order to portray the “relational circumstances of the situation represented” (p. 95). Because the relationship between inquirer and the participants “embeds meaning in the field text,” this meaning must be captured in the inquirer’s field notes. To this end, as an inquirer I kept my own Commonplace Books which I shared during the discussions, and I kept field notes in a separate notebook to capture details that the transcriptions of discussions might miss.

Narrative Analysis

As I discussed previously in this chapter, narrative inquirers argue that narratives do not speak for themselves but should be analyzed by a researcher who positions himself or herself as a co-producer of the narrative. Therefore, in this section, I discuss how I undertook the task of analyzing narratives I helped create.

There are various approaches to analyzing narratives, but because in this study, previously-written research questions guided the way I listened, transcribed, and analyzed the book discussions and Commonplace Books, I drew from Riessman's (2008) discussion of the thematic analysis. Rather than focusing on aspects such as audience, time of day, and other contextual factors which may be more important in other forms of analysis, a thematic analysis focuses almost exclusively on what is said, rather than "why," "when," or "to whom," and narratives "are interpreted in light of thematic developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory. . .)" (Reissmann 2008, p. 54). Indeed, as I used open-coding to sift through and later organize my narrative data, I did so according to themes, some of which were pre-determined, and others emerged as I analyzed the data. I then organized and charted the transcriptions of the narrative material based on the themes that I interpreted.

Oral Narrative Analysis

I began by transcribing all book discussion sessions and all individual interview sessions. Because, as Riessman argues, "interpretation is inseparable from transcription" (p. 116), my immediate analyses were made when I listened, multiple times, to the tape-recorded sessions of book discussions and interviews. As much as possible, I was careful to transcribe word-for-word what each participant said, including utterances such as "uh, um, uh-uh," and so forth. Again, however, as some utterances were spoken too low to be heard, while others were eclipsed by louder, more vocal participants enthusiastically interrupting, it is impossible for a one-dimensional transcription to capture all aspects of a narrative performance. I listened to each tape-recorded session no less than four times to ensure the most precise, most accurate account of what was said.

For the first listening and reading of each transcript, I listened to the discussion as a whole, trying to capture the overall tone of the evening as each participant discussed his or her reactions to the books we read. As I listened, I made notes of inflections in each participant's voice, trying to capture tone (loud, soft, adamant, tentative, playful, sarcastic, serious, angry, etc..) and also making notes of pauses or non-verbal noises (finger snapping, pages flipping, etc) that occurred during key moments of an exchange.

Then, I read and re-read each transcript, playing the recorded discussion as I did, bracketing full narratives and making notes of not only the social context in which each narrative took place, but also of each narrative's literary context (i.e., which book we were discussing, each passage, character, or plot event that may have elicited that narrative). I made notes of the times the conversation departed from a factual, plot-oriented account of the memoirs to personal reflections and experiences about them. I also noted incidents in which the participants discussed themselves as readers, describing their individual literary tastes and reading habits.

As I read the transcripts and listened to the recordings for a third time, I began coding the data thematically, using an open-coding process, and coming up with various categories for each type of comment. Examples of such categories are as follows: "Can't Teach *Wasted*," "Negative Reaction to *Wasted*," "Positive Reaction to *FBI Girl*," "Personal Story related to *Hole in My Life*," "Historical context of *FBI Girl*," to list a few. After I completed this coding process, I grouped similar codes together into six code families: "Teaching and Learning Stories," "Personal Narrative Stories," "General Reactions to the Text," "Literacy Narratives," "Stories about Writing in Commonplace Books," and "Historical and Cultural Connections."⁹ This, of course, is an interpretive process, and bits and fragments of narrative data can never be seamlessly and definitively categorized as one specific type of comment or another. On multiple

⁹ A full list of codes and code families is included in the next chapter.

occasions, I encountered statements that could be coded in more than one code family. For example, a participant discussing his or her aesthetic appreciation of a text because of its potential use as an example of a writing prompt might be coded under “Stories of Teaching and Learning,” but it could also be coded under “Reactions to the Text.” While I allowed these statements to be double (and sometimes triple-coded), when it was time to cite them in the following chapter, I ultimately decided to reference them from the code family that I felt best spoke to the focus of the study.

Once I completed the coding process, I made a chart of all code families and codes, citing relevant quotations from the typed transcriptions and highlighting comments that I deemed of importance. At this point, I was able to see patterns in the ways the participants reacted to the books as both readers and teachers, in the ways they told stories about themselves and their families, and the ways they discussed how they might use these books in their own classrooms.

Written Narrative Analysis:

To analyze the written data in the Commonplace Books, I charted to which passages the participants responded (i.e., the context of each response) and the nature of those responses (agreement, disagreement, shock, prediction, pedagogical strategy, personal narrative response, or aesthetic response to the writing style). I also indicated whether the response was made during the first reading or the second. I then used this chart to compare those results with the analyses of the verbal transcripts (which I have discussed above), noting whether the participants verbally discussed the same passages to which they responded in writing, and if so, how these discussions were similar or different.

Ethical Considerations

Though I endeavored to be participant-centered in the generation, transcription, and analysis of narrative texts, I remained mindful of a number of potential ethical issues as I listened to book discussions, interviewed the participants, and sorted through, reflected on, and composed texts from the narratives generated. For example, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution about the practical issues involving study design: as opposed to traditional methods of qualitative research, in narrative research, which requires extensive meetings between inquirer and the participants over a longer period of time, anonymity is difficult to secure. In this case, the participants met together, and many knew one another as a result of attending the same institution. However, the participants were asked to choose a pseudonym to be used once their narratives were represented in this study.

Another difficulty involved the standard practice of submitting informed consent documents, including all research protocols, which are difficult to produce at the outset of the study if the participants guide the inquirer during the process (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 176-177). Thus, it was necessary to word informed consent documents in a way that explained why interview protocols remained open to the participants' input.

Other ethical dilemmas, however, were more nebulous and resulted from the complexities of negotiating the inquirer-participant relationship, especially as, in my case, some of these relationships pre-dated the study. For instance, how might my previous acquaintance with some of the participants affect their participation? Might they feel more inclined to share? Less inclined? Moreover, how might my familiarity with some of the participants affect the group dynamic as a whole? Might the participants whom I did not know prior to the study perceive a sense of in-group, out-group and feel somewhat excluded?

Indeed, while all qualitative researchers face ethical dilemmas, we as narrative inquirers have made ourselves and the participants in our studies particularly vulnerable to sharing intimate, revealing details of personal experiences, and as such, have a greater responsibility to both the narrative research community and the participants to ensure that both are represented fairly. At the root of these issues is the problem of how to elicit and represent a participant's story fairly and fully, avoiding the erasure of individual experiences, the appropriation of voice, while at the same time producing a text that is meaningful. In this section, I shall discuss some of the ethical issues I faced in this study.

Vulnerable Participants and Sensitive Topics

Because we read young adult memoirs, which included frank discussions of serious or controversial topics, one issue I must address is that of broaching sensitive topics with the participants who may be vulnerable. While the participants in my study were not minors, and therefore not considered vulnerable populations under the Institutional Review Board's guidelines, they were still potentially emotionally vulnerable to texts that might prompt them to relive their own negative experiences of adolescence. Unfortunately, this is difficult to predict at the outset. In her essay "Narrating Sensitive Topics," Hyden (2008) points out that narrative inquirers may not be aware of what topics may be sensitive or taboo for the participants, or what narratives the participants may identify with in ways they do not expect, and which they do not wish to reflect upon or discuss. For example, the YA memoirs I used in this study included sensitive and taboo topics, such as eating disorders, imprisonment, sexual abuse or drug involvement, all of which could potentially lead to unexpected side effects for the participants who could have been reminded, of or re-traumatized by the reading, retelling, or hearing of

traumatic life experiences similar to their own, or to those of people they knew, that they might rather forget.

Moreover, I acknowledged that the participants' reflections on their own experiences may evoke memories that make them feel vulnerable. Thus, Hyden (2008) also points out that what may be sensitive for the inquirer may not be sensitive for the participant, but the inquirer's own unwillingness to engage the topic may create a power dynamic that inhibits openness. Even worse, if special care is not taken, the narrators' full lives can become eclipsed by the painful, darker sides of the events narrated. Moreover, because we met as a group, there was the added risk of the participants feeling vulnerable sharing personal information not only with me, the researcher, but with the other participants, as well. Thus, in my study, I found it necessary to give the participants multiple opportunities to offer counter-narratives to potentially sensitive or traumatic experiences that had been narrated. In particular, I was careful to ask for permission to use information that was shared with me outside the book-group or Commonplace Book context.

Of course, discussions containing sensitive conversations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed, which added another level of vulnerability for the participants. This is why it is important that the participants be involved at all stages of narrative inquiry and analysis to determine what they wished to reveal, and whether they wished to retract any sensitive information that could be too revealing or potentially damaging to themselves or others. This is also why I strongly encouraged the participants to use a pseudonym of their choosing when they are represented in the final product.

Role of the Narrative Inquirer

I also include a discussion of my own role, the researcher, within the context of a discussion of ethical issues inquirers address because, as Hyden (2008) reminds us, the

relationship between the inquirer and the participants is one in which the terms of power must be constantly under examination. As a researcher, I took seriously and acknowledged the part I played as an inquirer and co-participant in the narratives that were generated, especially when working with vulnerable participants and/or sensitive topics. “The researcher does not discover narratives but participates in their construction,” Riessman notes, echoing the general sentiment of most narrative inquirers (2008, p. 21). Thus, the narratives generated do not have an existence that can be separated from this relationship. To this end, in order to honor the give and take nature of narrative inquiry, I made myself equally vulnerable to the participants in order to foster a sense of mutual trust and openness, allowing myself a “kind of vulnerability to make (my own) secret stories public,” and being willing to be transparent with the participants, to sharing with them aspects and experiences of my own, as what I contributed in the process influenced the kinds of stories the participants were willing to tell (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 62). This vulnerability, of course, came with risk. As a researcher, I risked over-sharing my own stories; I risked that what I shared may be disclosed to others outside the study or may cause participants to view me in a negative light, thus impacting their willingness to participate in the study. Of course, all qualitative research involves some level of risk (Will my research be considered valid? Will it be taken seriously by other members of the research community?); in this case, however, the benefits outweighed the risks involved.

Wakefulness and Member-Checking

In this discussion of ethics, I close by addressing what would, in traditional qualitative methodologies, be called generalizability and validity, for these issues are grounded in the inquirer’s obligation to present to the narrative research community a text that is meaningful and useful, but still honors the input and voices of the participants. However, most narrative

inquirers avoid terms such as “generalizability” and “validity” because these terms refer to data that can be reproduced under identical circumstances, and narrative inquirers know, of course, that while circumstances may be similar for the various participants, they can never be identical.

To address this, Clandinin and Connelly (2008) claim that narrative inquiry should rely on other criteria besides validity, reliability, and generalizability. Instead of the traditional qualitative terms aforementioned, “wakefulness” is their current term, which describes a narrative inquirer’s “being aware of what (others) might think or say of their work, aware of the contexts that generated this work, of questions about field texts from the point of view of the participants,” and “being aware of place, social and personal points of view, and temporality” (p. 182). In terms of my own study, I drew on Clandinin and Connelly’s concept of wakefulness, which I maintained partially through the keeping of a Commonplace Book of my own along with the participants, and the keeping of an honest field journal in which I noted the internal and external contexts which shape the readings, discussions, and interviews with the participants about the YA memoir and the life stories they elicited.

Beyond the researcher’s wakefulness, narrative inquirers also involve their participants in member checking, an on-going process in which the collaborative nature of narrative generation and representation is honored. On the one hand, traditional qualitative researchers seek to establish validity in their findings, that is, they strive to answer “Did we get it right?” or “Did we publish a ‘wrong’ or inaccurate account” (Stake, quoted in Creswell, 2007, p. 201). For narrative inquirers, however, because any narrative constructed is always in progress, subject to the temporal and cultural conditions that shaped it and which may change at any point, getting it “right” has to do more with honoring an account with which the participants would agree, as closely as possible, than with measuring that account against external or objective standards.

This involves finding the delicate balance between making a text meaningful for other inquirers without reducing the narrative and the narrator to a convenient type or form. For the purposes of my study, I sent all the participants an electronic copy of a draft of the narrative analysis chapter, the chapter in which their words and motivations would be (re)presented. I asked for their input, and reminded them that, especially in the case of more sensitive topics analyzed, they were allowed to withdraw, shorten, or amend their narratives at any time.

However, this is not to say that inquirers and participants must be in total agreement over an event's interpretation or a narrative's analysis, nor does it imply that the role of the inquirer should be to act as a "fact checker" to verify the so-called "truth" of a participant's narrative¹⁰. Maynes et al. (2008) also agree that "analysts need not always agree with narrators' interpretations of their own lives. . . . When there is disagreement, analysts are responsible for acknowledging it, explaining why they chose one interpretation over another" (p. 116). As an inquirer, I allowed for the participants to disagree with me and vocalize their disagreement freely, but I also allowed discursive space for their disagreements to be seen, not as contradictions to one another's accounts, but as multiple perspectives to be voiced. The effort is worthwhile, however, because as Riessman (2008) points out, "readers' involvement in . . . analysis opens the possibility of risk, but also invites multiple, contested ways of understanding the narrative" (p. 112). When inquirers relinquish the need for single, dominant interpretations and leave room for contestation and multiple voices to be heard, narrative inquiry and analysis

¹⁰ Narrative inquirers are seldom interested in the so-called objective "truth" of a participant's narrative. In fact, especially in a dialogical analysis such as the one I undertook, an inquirer's role in determining the objective "truth" in a narrative is minimal; much more important for the inquirer is an analysis of the conditions and contexts in which a participant contributed a narrative. Paul John Eakin's *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (2008) has been particularly influential in shaping my understanding of how are identities are constructed through acts of autobiographical speaking and writing

can be a meaningful exchange that benefits not only inquirers and the participants, but also the narrative research community in particular, and the research community at large.

Limitations

Obviously, in any qualitative study, there will be limitations. As a narrative study, it is not intended to be replicable or even easily generalizable to similar other studies, given that the setting (the flagship university of a small, Southern state) and the individual personalities involved created a book-group dynamic that was unique. Other limitations were created by me, the researcher. For example, the narratives that will be presented in the following chapter have been selected, organized, and presented in one of many possible arrangements, and some decisions were made by me, with the input of the participants, regarding which narratives would be selected for inclusion and which would not. Other external factors, such as the setting (in a university) and the time (during the spring semester) affected the number of available participants who were willing to commit to this project.

In this study in particular, what can be generalized to further studies is limited by the fact that I faced participant withdrawal, unexpected data sources (such as emails and unrecorded conversations after the official book group meetings were over), and a technology failure that severely hampered my ability to transcribe fully one of our early book group meetings. Also, the participants' involvement in undergraduate and graduate school studies limited the number of times and the length of time we were able to meet, how many books we were able to read, and how much time the participants were able to devote to written reflections. In addition, this study was constrained by the degree to which my own subject positions (a white, female, middle-class former classroom teacher) influenced the design of the study, the list of books from which the participants originally chose, the stories I chose to share with the participants, and the way that

my own readings of the texts may have influenced what we discussed. Generalizability from this study to actual classroom practice is also limited by the fact that the writing completed in the Commonplace Books in our book group constitute a separate speech/writing occasion, which for Miller (1984) would be a different genre of writing, than writing in Commonplace Books by students in classrooms. After all, the individuals in this study participated willingly and were not writing for assessment or evaluation; students in a classroom would have other motivations and may not feel as free to refuse to participate. Finally, as a narrative study involving multiple personalities and multiple texts, not all the participants contributed in the same way; some told more personal stories, while others contributed many pedagogical strategies, and not all the texts elicited the same sorts of contribution from the participants. One text in particular (*Hole in My Life*), did not elicit any personal stories from the participants, while another (*Wasted*) elicited many personal stories but very few teaching strategies.

Summary

In this chapter I argued that reading-response methods such as the Commonplace Book strategy are useful sites for narrative inquiry because such methods provide occasions for readers to construct narratives, both spoken and written, about their own lives while reading, especially while reading the constructed narratives of others, and these narratives are a beneficial source of reflection for pre-service teachers developing a teacher identity. Furthermore, I argued that narrative inquiry, as opposed to other, more traditional qualitative research methods, offers a more participant-centered approach to inquiry that makes transparent the processes of life narrative generation, analysis, and production by reauthorizing the participant whose life narratives are being constructed. Finally, I have described a study working with pre-service and in-service teachers in which they read and discussed three young adult memoirs and kept a

Commonplace Book for each text they read. As I have discussed, through this study I have explored what types of stories emerge when pre-service and in-service teachers encounter others' life narratives, and I learned how the process of keeping a Commonplace Book and constructing a life narrative might provide opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers to consider the pedagogical uses of young adult memoirs as well as reader-response methods as they construct their own narratives of teacher identity and perform these narratives in the classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

There are a thousand stories told in a narrative study. While all stories, no matter their length, are meaningful, my task in this chapter is to sift through these stories, preserve as many as I can, and then organize, analyze, and present them in a way that both honors the tellers of the stories and also communicates a meaningful story to the reader, all the while being transparent as to my reasons for selecting some stories and omitting others. And because narrative inquiry is an interpretative act at all stages, what follows is but one of the myriad ways the narratives generated in the give-and-take of the book club can be selected and (re)presented. In this chapter, I tell the story of the book club in a series of three shorter narratives that I believe speak to the original three research questions that guided this study. Those research questions, to reiterate from Chapters One and Three, are as follows:

1. What types of stories do in-service and pre-service teachers tell about themselves when they engage with young adult memoirs?
2. How do the participants' aesthetic responses to the text, in the book discussions and in the Commonplace Books, compare to the ways they talk about using young adult memoirs in their own future classrooms?
3. What might teachers learn about themselves as readers from and through the process of reading and re-reading texts and keeping their responses in Commonplace Books?

As I explained in the previous chapter, I applied a thematic approach to analyzing the narrative materials that were created over the course of this study. I generated a list of codes, which I then organized into five code families into which I categorized the participants' oral and written responses to the texts. While a full chart of codes and code families is included in the appendix, for the sake of clarity and transparency, an abbreviated code chart is presented below. (See Table 2)

Table 2 Code Families and Associated Codes

Code Family:	Codes Included:
Teaching and Learning Stories	Teaching background Books I've taught in school How to teach <i>Hole in my Life</i> How to teach <i>Wasted</i> How to teach <i>FBI Girl</i> Teaching controversial books Teaching context Future education plans
Personal Narrative Stories	Personal story about weight Personal story about loss Family story about weight Personal story about acne Personal story about pregnancy Personal story about family Personal story about gender roles
General Reactions to Text	Summary of text Positive reaction to <i>FBI Girl</i> Positive reaction to <i>Wasted</i> Positive reaction to <i>Hole in My Life</i> Negative reaction to <i>Wasted</i> Question about text
Literacy Narratives	Reading books in school Reading YA fiction Reading for fun How I read an autobiography Grad school changes reading habits Love to read Re-reading books Re-reading insights
Stories about writing in Commonplace Books	Difficulty writing in books Writing in books for first time Writing in books slows reading Writing in books enhances reading Writing in book difficult for students Writing in books during the second reading
Historical/social context of text	Historical context of <i>Hole in My Life</i> Social context about <i>Wasted</i> Pop culture reference to <i>Wasted</i> Historical context of <i>FBI Girl</i>

Of course, while all narrative data is meaningful, not all narrative data is relevant to an individual study, and some will go unused (Smagorinsky 2008). Therefore, not all these codes and code families will be included in this dissertation. Because this is a narrative study that pulls together fragmented, personal narratives, the code family “Personal Narrative Stories” is the most represented code family in this study, followed by “Stories of Teaching and Learning,” “Literacy Narratives,” and “Stories about Writing in the Commonplace Book.” To a lesser extent, narratives classified under “Reactions to the Text” were used, while very little from the code family “Historical/Social Context of Text” is cited in this dissertation. The reason I de-emphasized these latter narratives is purely logistic: in this study, I am interested in the ways teachers situate themselves in young adult memoirs as both readers and teachers; general aesthetic reactions and comprehension-comments, while important, do not speak to the focus of the study unless they augment or give context to a personal story a participant may later share, or serve in contrast to actual pedagogical uses that the participants cited.

Again, there were two major sets of materials from which to analyze: transcriptions from oral statements and dialogue in the book group meetings and individual interviews, and written comments the participants made in the Commonplace Books that they kept. At the outset of the study, I had expected that the Commonplace Books would actually constitute the primary source of narrative material; in fact, the opposite occurred. Perhaps because of various factors such as the participants’ unfamiliarity with the method of keeping a Commonplace Book as well as the participants’ own time and space constraints, the primary source of reflection- and hence, analysis- was the transcriptions of oral narrative materials. Therefore, in the following sections in which I discuss the three narratives that I, as researcher, generated from the narrative materials, I include both narratives from the transcripts and narratives and responses that were recorded in

the Commonplace Books. In order to preserve the overall coherence and include as much of the participants' voices as possible, and also avoid further fragmentation of the narratives, I include fairly long quotations from each participant. In some cases, I put together dialogue that would have otherwise been fragmented by interruptions from other participants. These cases are noted as such with an ellipsis with "later" in square brackets.

I organize and present the narrative findings as follows:

- Narratives of vulnerability: While reading young adult memoirs in a book club setting, the participants were willing to reveal deeply personal narratives of their adolescence and early adulthood, regardless of their feelings about and aesthetic reactions to the books we were discussing. Of these narratives of vulnerability, I constructed
 - Embodied Stories: to describe the particular narratives the participants told that had to do with their own bodies as they situate themselves in the texts.
 - Stories of Silence and Loss: to share stories about families and communities that previously had not been told.
- Narratives of conflict: The participants grappled with the conflict between their personal, aesthetic reactions to the young adult memoirs and their struggle to find ways to incorporate them into their curricula without offending parent groups and administration, particularly when these memoirs discussed potentially controversial topics. In this section I discuss the texts in the order they were read:
 - *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos
 - *Wasted* by Maura Hornbacher
 - *FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code* by Maura Conlon Mc-Ivor

- Narratives of insight: Despite articulating initial reluctance, the participants were willing to engage with the Commonplace Book strategy and vocalized possible uses for it in their own classrooms; they noted that this way of reading, re-reading, and reflecting enhanced their understanding and appreciation of a text. I divided these narratives into two smaller sections:
 - On Reading and Re-reading
 - On Writing in Commonplace Books

Narratives of Vulnerability

I use the phrase “narratives of vulnerability” to describe the risk the participants undertook when sharing their “stories, secret and shared” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) about themselves and their families with me, the researcher, in the presence of other the participants, some of whom they had not previously met. These are personal narratives, which I distinguish from other types of responses the participants might have made when discussing a text. These responses are important because they reveal the ways the participants situate themselves into the narratives of the texts we read, and as such, are part of an identity-creating process that depends on narrative structures (Sumara 2002, p. 15). Typical of book clubs, discussing a text in the presence of others often lends itself to the telling of stories, even deeply personal ones not previously shared before, hence Clandinin and Connelly’s reference to “secret and shared.” Not simply a negative state of being, vulnerability is often required for the building of close kinships, such as those created among readers when discussing their personal reactions to a common text. On the other hand, making oneself vulnerable might also leave a book club participant with the feeling that his or her stories may be misunderstood, misinterpreted, or misrepresented. In fact, I discussed the potential to be vulnerable when I met with the participants in the first meeting:

At the end of the study you might feel differently, you might say, you know, I did open up a lot when we were talking about...I just know that there are times we can be open, and that can make us vulnerable, right? When you share of yourself, that can make you vulnerable, and reading can make you vulnerable, and talking about reading can make you vulnerable (pause)- in good ways, but also, um, in ways that you, that you might feel are negative down the road, that can have consequences. (Heather, Meeting One, 1/14/13)

Indeed, more than anything, I wanted the participants to feel safe sharing parts of themselves with the group, but I also did not want them to feel pressured to do so. Again, as the participants navigate this space between their private readings and public discussions (Sumara 1995), they may find themselves vulnerable to over-sharing personal stories or revealing strong emotions elicited by the texts. Moreover, as different texts can trigger different emotions and memories of experiences, it is impossible for me, a researcher, to prepare fully for the very personal stories the participants shared with one another, in moments both serious and humorous.

Therefore, the classification “narratives of vulnerability” is a subjective one that I created. While the participants never actually verbalized a feeling of vulnerability, I used cues from body language (noted in the transcripts) that a particular story may be somewhat difficult to tell. I also used similar cues from the other participants that a particular story may be difficult to hear. And as a co-generator of these narratives, I also attended to my own feelings of vulnerability when telling my own stories and listening to others’ stories. Thus, it was also during these discussions that as a researcher, I was careful to tread lightly, allowing the participants to speak uninterrupted and, at the same time, being most hesitant to press for more information. Remarkably, though, the sharing of stories occurred during book discussions even when the participants reacted negatively to the text we were discussing. Thus, “narratives of vulnerability” speak to the first research question (What kinds of stories do teachers tell?) and are categorized in the code family “Personal Stories.”

Again, as I sorted through these narratives of vulnerability, I found that I could further subdivide them into two different types of stories. I call these types Embodied Stories, which include the participants' discussions of their own experiences with body dysmorphia (a hatred of one's own body), extreme dieting, bingeing, and also weight gain during and after pregnancy; and Stories of Silence and Loss, stories about families and communities that had previously not been told.

Embodied Stories

"Embodied Stories" is a play on Sumara's (1995) concept of embodied reading, in which actual readers situate themselves (as gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed persons) in their readings as they make meaning of, embrace, and resist texts. I use the phrase to describe the particular narratives the participants told that had to do with their own bodies- - narratives of weight, narratives of dieting, and narratives of pregnancy. In fact, as I will show, these "embodied stories" make up the bulk of the personal narratives that were shared in the book group, despite the fact, or perhaps, because of the fact, that the text that elicited them was the most troubling, polarizing text selected by the book group. Indeed, in this study in particular, reading *Wasted*, a memoir of body dysmorphia, anorexia, and bulimia, elicited from most participants accounts of their own dieting or their experiences with friends or family members who struggle(d) with disordered eating. Like the narrator of *Wasted*, several of the participants also communicated a lack of resolution in these experiences. On the other hand, others used *Wasted* to discuss the ways that they resisted the pressure to restrict calories and instead, found pleasure in cooking, eating, and being comfortable with their bodies.

Having already met together twice previously, we discussed *Wasted* once the participants had begun to establish a rapport with one another. At first, Lauren articulated the strongest

identification with the text and offered the most personal story. In fact, she shared with the group that *Wasted* triggered a physical reaction for her while reading:

I griped about it, I griped to Derek, my boyfriend. I was griping it's just making me sick to read it. Because I can just see, see the throw up? And it made me sick. Because she's so self-destructive. And he said you can't be that way about it because some people's brains are just wired differently. And she's just a different person. You can't judge her for that- And I'm like, I know that, but still. I can't read about it..... You know what I mean? I'd read it and think, "Oh man. Maybe I should lay off the pizza." (laughs) I know she's crazy, but.. I'm growing my thighs a little bit. Maybe I should just not eat that cookie. It made me just sick. (Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

While she was reluctant to share her story in the group, in an email¹¹ she revealed to me her on-going struggles that gave context for and depth to the comments she made in the book group: like the narrator of *Wasted*, Lauren, too, had struggled with a possible (though undiagnosed) eating disorder. She would later allude to this account in a later book discussion, once she had established rapport with the group:

I was borderline anorexia as well. I grew up [conservative Christian, denomination name removed by request of the participant], so the goal was to get married and have babies. Who wants a chubby girl? I was constantly reminded that I was bigger than most, so I would basically starve. My earliest memory of being aware of this is when I was three or four. I would go play with my cousin, and my aunt would weigh me. I would be smaller than my cousin, and she would tell me that I would be bigger than her the next year, and it went on for awhile. Also, I remember learning how to view my body from my mother as well. She is beautiful and small for an older woman, but she would constantly put herself down, and I learned to do the same. I would be really, really skinny and would receive compliments and it would reinforce the behavior. I was extremely small two years ago from starving, and I would eat only a couple of bites of muffin a day or so, and my cousin Amy liked to have had a fit about how good I looked... This has been something that I have struggled with for a long time and still do. I am having trouble now, because I feel like I am too big and need to lose weight. It's very hard for me to do without eating hardly anything, so I think I need to starve again. I had lost a couple of pounds recently, and my grandmother told me that I looked awful and I needed to gain some weight. Then she thought about it a minute and told me that I needed to be aware of my thighs and keep losing, because I shouldn't gain anymore weight there. My boyfriend is very supportive and tells me that I look good the way I am now and how he thought I

¹¹ Lauren has given me permission to quote this email in my dissertation.

didn't look good as skinny as I was a couple of years ago, but I am aware that if I got bigger than I am that he would have trouble staying with me. It feels like a constant battle for me. (Lauren, Email Communication, 3/22/13).

Lauren's account, in which dieting and anorectic behavior are on-going, learned behaviors that are encouraged by others' negative remarks and are exacerbated by familial strife, is remarkable in its similarity to the family dynamic described by Marya Hornbacher, the narrator/author of *Wasted*. This is not to say that Lauren identifies with the narrator at all. In fact, Hornbacher noted in the introduction of her text that she wished readers would not identify with her. Lauren simply pointed out her own similarities and openly revealed how the text triggered, for her, deeply personal struggles which she had previously not shared with others (Hornbacher 1998, p.7). Indeed, Lauren's willingness to make herself vulnerable to me, as well as to the other participants, inspired me to share with the book group my own history of eating-disordered behavior, pointing out a particular passage in the text that elicited my own memories of "staring at those girls, even in 3rd and 4th grade, at school, those girls who just came out of the womb graceful (when) I always had my cheap Lee jeans on or my Chic jeans on that my mom got at Sears.....And I would stare at them and wish that my body looked like that" (Heather, Meeting Three, 3/20/13). As a narrative study which requires give and take of both the participants and researcher, my own willingness to make myself vulnerable and open to sharing influenced, and was influenced by, the degree to which the participants did the same.

Other participants responded to *Wasted* based on the experiences of others in their social circles. For instance, while Chad did not disclose a personal experience with extreme dieting of his own, he related that he immediately connected the text of *Wasted* with two of his closest friends, using the text to make sense of behaviors he had observed in them but which he previously had not understood. In a follow-up interview (as Chad was absent from the group

discussion of *Wasted*), he related how he initially discussed his reading of *Wasted* with a close friend and was shocked by her response:

Well, I spoke with this good friend of mine in Houston. She's this beautiful black girl who could be a supermodel if she wanted to. And we've been friends probably since the 11th grade. And she told me about a year ago that she struggled with bulimia in high school. And I *never* would've known it. And it was, I never knew anyone that suffered from bulimia, and it was shocking for me. But when I read this, I remembered that. And then half-way through this book I contacted her, and I told her I was reading this book and when she'd told me I had no clue what bulimia was. I knew what it was but like most people. And I told her I'd been reading this book and I connected in a much deeper way what she was going through. And she said, "Are you reading *Wasted*?" (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13)

Later in our interview, as he had given himself time to think about the prevalence of eating-disordered behavior among young, college-age women, he mused aloud his fears for another friend, making sense (though being unwilling to label her himself) of her behavior through the lens of Hornbacher's account:

I have a really close friend who, um, isn't, she doesn't have an eating disorder, she hasn't been diagnosed with an eating disorder, but she has been diagnosed with clinical depression for the past three years. She's overweight and she, I remember, she was overweight, deemed overweight in the 4th or 5th grade, and she went to the Pennington Institute, and did some tests and did some healthy eating things and in middle school lost some weight, and then when she went to high school she started gaining more weight, and she was diagnosed with depression and since then she's put on quite a few pounds, and it's the source of her depression. It's obviously the source of her depression; it's all about her weight and how she looks, all the time. There's nothing else that makes her unhappy. I know this; I spend quite a lot of time with her, and everything that she goes through mentally is that of someone with an eating disorder. Everything she goes through mentally is that of my friend Caitlyn. It's strange because she doesn't have the lack of eating, but she has disordered mentality. She can't get out of bed in the morning because she doesn't want to try, she doesn't want to see how she looks wearing the clothes in her closet.... (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13)

Thus, for Chad, reading *Wasted* did not trigger personal experience, but it did give shape to a new understanding of two close friends' struggles. However, not all accounts by the participants reflect a struggle similar to Hornbacher's. Another participant, Taylor, described

how she initially was able to identify with some of the narrator's account, but eventually resisted the identity of "anorectic" and found some resolution in her own, early struggles:

When I first started reading it she was talking about the age of nine, I was like, what was I doing at the age of nine where I thought something was wrong with my body? So it's like, trying to think back in my childhood of things that might have come close to hers, and all I can remember about being nine was I had insecurities about my body because I got breasts early, and I had pubic hair early, and a year later I got my menstrual cycle, so I remember having, like, the technical body of an adult, of going to an adult woman at nine, and not being viewed as a child anymore? . . .(later)In high school I was a size six, but by college I'd gained that freshman 15, but then I went through a really bad breakup and went into starvation mode where I was eating out of a little bitty saucer like that (holds up circle the circumference of pointer finger and thumb connecting), and I would have like a little tablespoon of everything, so I can see how you can just slip into the anorexia part, but I never did like the throwing up, so I didn't get the bulimia, and it wasn't until I had my oldest son that I became comfortable, and as you can see my comfort has stayed, but I'm comfortable in my body now. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Later, in a second discussion of *Wasted* (two months after the first), Taylor re-articulated her resistance to social norms concerning women's bodies and the on-going imperatives to diet, control eating, and be thin:

I have a scale that's beautiful. It's glass. And I never get on it! It's all dusty- I eat what I want to. I'm supposed to take cholesterol pills but they were making me sick. So I'm gonna eat lemon pie. So I'm like, you know what? We all got to die of something, so I'm gonna eat. And while I read this book I was eating pizza. She gotta eat. Maybe she'd be less cranky if she weren't so hungry. So then I start eating... .(Taylor, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

Indeed, in a follow-up interview, Taylor extended her critique of extreme dieting and obsessive exercising to include a critique of the ways women's appearances, in general, are held up for scrutiny disproportionately to the ways their health needs in general and their professional and intellectual contributions to society are discussed:

I was always skinny. I always had hips, but I didn't have the big behind, and they were like, You're a black girl, you're supposed to have a big booty. Where's your booty? And I was like, where's that written? Please show me where that's written because I've seen lots of girls who are not black have big booties. They were like,

your butt is flat. Ok. And the world is going to end because? But it took a long time to get to that point. I was trying to figure out ways I could make it bigger. And then it was like, huh, I don't care anymore. . . . Cause and a long time they had me hating my hair, they said "You have nappy hair." You can see my hair's not straight, you can see it at the roots, but I'm like, I'm black, and my hair's not supposed to be straight. But for a long time I was getting lots of perms 'cause I thought my hair was supposed to be straight and just lay down. . . . Like all the things Condoleeza Rice did, and the first thing people comment on is her hair style. : Not the fact that she speak like 7 or 8 languages. Or that she's got all these degrees, have all this knowledge. Was one of the first female secretary of states. Was one of the first black ones. All they focused on was her hair. Dressed beautifully, but no matter what, her hair. "She need to do something with her hair." She like her hairstyle, leave her alone. She still wore that same hair style. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13)

Here, Taylor shows how she resisted gendered norms for body image and body weight, and that she also resisted the Anglo-Saxon aesthetic for straight hair that has been imposed on Black women. Taylor's reading of *Wasted* indicates her resistance to situate herself within the body of an anorectic and instead, pushed back against these aesthetic imperatives.

Likewise, Lucy also used the text of *Wasted* to recall her own resistance to the pressure to diet, even as it came from close family members, and described how reading the text allowed her to re-examine of a part of her life to which she reported otherwise giving little thought. After listening to other participants' accounts of learning their dieting behaviors from their mothers and other women around them, Lucy confided:

I think it's funny you [other participants] talk about, you know, your mom and the food and internalizing it, and I think part of the reason I can relate to it is I, I have a weird relationship with food in the opposite direction, the overeating, this kind of new American obesity standards. But I very firmly remember my father and stepmom being very concerned about my weight. And I think I was older, so I don't know how much that has to do with it, but in early middle school, like in sixth grade, you're overweight, you're too fat, you're not supposed to be this way as a child, you need to lose weight, you need to exercise more, oh no you can't eat that, and I went the opposite direction with it, I was like, "Fuck you, I'm gonna do what I want. I'm going to eat because you tell me I cannot eat. "And I was never a rebellious child, or overly rebellious, I guess, but I don't know, I wonder how much that has to do with age or where that was coming from. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Later describing her family as “a family of food,” Lucy’s resistance to the imperative to diet makes it clear, discussing how *Wasted* brought about narratives of empowerment as well as narratives of vulnerability from readers (Meeting Three, 3/20/13). Indeed, from physical reactions to the text to social, political, and cultural commentary contextualized by our readings of *Wasted*, it was clear that discussions of dieting and eating-disordered behavior were triggers that elicited strong reactions, some positive and some negative, from all the participants involved. But situating our bodies in these two readings of *Wasted* went beyond discussions of dieting and body image; inevitably, other discussions of the body, namely pregnancy, emerged.

As the only other participant (besides me) who has personally experienced pregnancy and childbirth, Taylor began this discussion, considering the ways women’s bodies are medicalized especially during pregnancy, as the directive to “gain enough weight, but not too much” becomes forefront in both personal and pop-cultural discussions of the pregnant female body. She explained that while her teenaged body weight was initially a source of concern for family members who felt she weighed too much, her pregnancy (and ensuing morning sickness) elicited other concerns:

And then when I got pregnant with my older son, my doctor begged me, cause instead of gaining weight I was losing. He was like, “Are you dieting?” And I was like, no, I have morning sickness really bad, and it was just nine months of that stuff all day, but wanted to send me to a psychiatrist because he thought I had an eating disorder and was dieting. Cause I didn’t gain weight, I lost 30 pounds. And Mom had to tell him I had morning sickness all day before he would believe I wasn’t starving myself. And I had a seven pound baby so I wasn’t starving, he got what he needed, I was just, not looking right. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

She echoed a similar sentiment several weeks later, when we discussed our second reading of *Wasted*:

We eat 3-6 meals a day. I remember being pregnant, Doc said, “You need to gain weight. You need to eat six meals a day.” And I was like, “Really? Six?” So I’d eat breakfast then a snack, then lunch and a snack, then supper and a snack after

supper. That was the most eating I ever did. I thought, Lord, after I have this baby I'm never eating again. (Taylor, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

When I agreed, adding, "Being pregnant...was the only time in my life I didn't feel like I needed to diet. ... [I]t was a positive thing to see my body in a very different light. As much as the hugeness of it was off-putting, it was something really cool" (Meeting Five, 4/25/13), it was clear that for some of us, the pregnant female body could also be understood as a source of resistance to outside cultural imperatives for thinness, even as this resistance was a source of concern for others. Nevertheless, as our discussion of *Wasted* wound to a close and we grappled for some sort of resolution, we generally agreed on the potentially empowerment of pregnancy, which could have been, for some, a source of healing from past body traumas. As Lucy summed up, "Being able to see her body in a different light, if she could. ...That could be very valuable" (Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

As we situated ourselves in the text of *Wasted*, considering the trappings of our own bodies and how these trappings are politicized and scrutinized, we searched for ways to find positive resolution from an otherwise troubling text. That resolution resulted in our collective accounts of resisting cultural imperatives, even as these ways are imperfect and incomplete.

Stories of Silence and Loss

In the previous section above, which I call Embodied Stories, I relate narratives in which the participants discussed the ways they internalized or resisted the text *Wasted*. For at least one participant, this text triggered a physical response, and for others among us, it triggered our own memories of feeling vulnerable and insecure about our bodies, but also elicited narratives in which the participants spoke of ways they could resist, narratives in which the body could be empowering. In this section, which I call Stories of Silence and Loss, the participants give voice to family and community stories previously not shared. Rather than telling stories in which the

participants' physical being-ness is elicited by the text, these are stories about which, according to the tellers, their families and communities had previously kept silent, hence their inclusion in *Narratives of Vulnerability*. As we tell these stories, we consider the ways that silences can be damaging and contribute to misunderstandings, anger, mistrust, stigma, and disempowerment. These kinds of stories resemble, structurally, what Squire (2008) calls "narratives of experience," which she defines as "sequential temporal orderings (which) make us human" but are "flexible about time and space, and defined by *theme* rather than structure" (Squire 2008, p. 43, added emphasis). As such, the focus here is on the story's content, as well as the situation (a text) that prompted it to be told for the first time. In particular, reading *FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code*, by Maura Conlon-McIvor (2004) gave us the opportunity and space to make meaning of our own secret stories and articulate them to the group.

FBI Girl describes a family's response, as told from the point of view of a daughter, to the birth and upbringing of a child with Down syndrome. Set in the late 1960's on the cusp of the women's movement, the text depicts how the community's response was one of silence, a collective inability to acknowledge the birth of the child Joey or acknowledge that his impairments could be understood as anything other than "tragic" (Conlon-McIvor, p. 31). As her father was a respected member of the community and an FBI agent, Conlon-McIvor recalls how her parents' marriage became cold and distant as her father became increasingly emotionally unavailable to his older children and his wife. Central to the text was the narrator's determination to break her father's silence that surrounded Joey (she referred to it as her father's "code"), as he withdrew affection from all family members save the baby. As we explored the nature of these family silences and tense father-daughter relationships that were often, in part, attributable to generational differences, Taylor offered an extended account of her own evolving

relationship with her father, and how she, like Conlon-McIvor, sought after his attention and companionship:

I liked this book. I just paralleled it with my daddy being a police officer for like 25 years, working 11-7. For a while I did try to pick out what the police-speak was, I'd hear the word "resident" and I was like "What's that mean??" I didn't know that word, what it meant, but I'm home, so it's like, I spent time with him, but we didn't really bond till I got older. 'Cause it's like, "You're a girl child, go do girl things." I turned 18 and started college, and we played cards, and it was like, "Let's go to Bingo! (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Taylor initially identified with *FBI Girl* because she, too, had a father who had worked in law enforcement; like Conlon-McIvor's father, Taylor's father also spoke in a particular "code," and like Conlon-McIvor's father, understood his job as a police officer as an extension of his identity. Taylor furthers the comparison between her own father and Conlon-McIvor's by emphasizing remembered words her father repeated, "You're a girl child; go do girl things." However, as she began to relate this out loud, she began to verbalize the ways her own gender was shaped by her father's rather negative attitude towards close, father-daughter relationships and his traditional views about women's roles in the family, to the extent that her own dating and sexuality were controlled by her father, who acted in his dual-role as father and police officer:

And then I was 21 and we could go to the boat, but all the way up that point, "You're a girl child. Go play with girls. Go follow your mama, see what your mama can do with you." My favorite, "You don't need to work; tell Daddy what you want." I miss that. . . Yeah, 'cause you look for that, my daddy only had one son and three daughters, and my sister didn't come till I was 11. I was like, my sister don't like me, my brother's a boy, they don't want to play with me. Let me go find my daddy. He didn't play with girls, he was like, "Go play with these dolls." He didn't know he could actually nurture and engage with his daughter. We played tackle football in the yard with the boys and he was like, "Nope! Get in the house! Girls don't do that!" Even in the 70's in my house, he was like, you're a girl. Just concentrate on getting married. I'm like, getting married?? You want to go to college for real? I'm like, yeah. So it's like, ok. He wanted to, my dad actually wanted to drive me to college and drop me off and center his life around me and come get me. 'Cause I might get a boyfriend while I was at school. He was a policeman and was always scaring them off anyway. He'd come in with his full uniform on and his gun on his side and his shotgun in his hand. He called his shotgun Charlie Brown. My grandfather's name. And he'd

sit in between us. “Anything you want to do to my daughter you have to do with me first.” Now what boy wants to hear that? (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Having never told anyone of her father’s prohibitions against her dating, Taylor softened, considering her father’s own upbringing and age, as well as his occupation, as a factor in what she perceived as strictness:

My dad wasn’t really evolved, he was like, “Women don’t need to work.” My mama went to work when I was in high school. And it’s kinda like, the girl’s mama was reversed because my mama was a stay-at-home mother, like, “If you go to work, your kids are going to go to ruin.” I was in 10th grade, how much ruin can I go to? (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Much like Conlon-McIvor, Taylor situated her coming-of-age in the 1970’s and attributed her father’s attitudes and behaviors to his identification with an older generation. She emphasized the tensions between her father’s expectations for women (“Women don’t need to work”) and her mother’s, who went into the workforce in her middle age, and her own. Thus, for Taylor, the text foregrounded real-life tensions that existed in many families, tensions which often go unresolved.

As we grappled with the nature of silences, we considered the degree to which generational expectations might influence a family’s or a community’s ability to discuss matters that were traditionally considered taboo or shameful. For example, one participant, Hannah, had difficulty understanding why, in the text *FBI Girl*, the Conlon family only received letters of congratulation from J. Edgar Hoover on the births of the first five children, while the sixth child Joey, born with Down syndrome, was unacknowledged. For Hannah, Hoover’s silence was far more troublesome than the author’s use of the word “retarded” to describe her brother:

And the other thing that got me, I’m just trying to skim through this, [flips pages of book] when Hoover didn’t send the letter about Joey. All the letters were on the wall. That got me more than them saying retarded or stupid. I’m like, they didn’t even acknowledge that a baby was born! You know, Wow. The government- I mean, wow! (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Listening to Hannah's response, we considered our own educational contexts, recalling the silences surrounding children with cognitive or physical impairments, and critiquing how these silences, this lack of acknowledgement and understanding only, contribute to furthering their marginalization. For instance, Taylor described her own schooling experience in the 1980's:

When I was in school they didn't differentiate. You were mild, moderate, profound. You were mentally retarded; it might be Down's, Asburger's, Autism, Like I was telling my children, You also didn't see those children when I was in school. They had their own separate little wing. They ate lunch and stuff with each other; you just didn't see them. You didn't see them on the bus, they rode their own bus. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

For Taylor, a special education teacher, the lack of visibility of children with cognitive and language impairments was problematic. She later explained that as a professional teacher, she became protective around these children with difference (calling them "my kids") and wrestled with how to acknowledge them within the school community while seeking not to subject their behaviors to stigma:

I always removed labels; I never wanted to hear what your exceptionality was. They were like "Troy's eating grass," and I'd say "Troy's just different and he likes grass. [Taylor]'s gonna buy him some grass, and y'all go worry about what y'all want to eat. He had pica and he would eat pretty much anything. So that was the child to watch, but the kids learned to baby him, and they'd say, "No Troy, don't eat that." And they would take stuff from him, but you had to kinda like train them. Though those are the words people use, we don't use them here because sometimes words hurt peoples' feelings. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Lucy concurred with her own experience, far more recent than Taylor's:

But even in high school and middle school, in my middle school and high school, those kids were still separated out. You either didn't know, I'm sure, a couple of my friends had forms of high-functioning autism. That was really common among gifted children to have weird social skills....[laughs] But they were either totally mixed in and you didn't know, or they were totally separated. Like I couldn't even tell you where the classroom was when I was in high school, where the kids with severe Downs or severe autistic tendencies were. You knew they were around, you saw them every now and again, but they were definitely somewhere else. We didn't talk about it. (Lucy, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Framing her narrative with “those kids were still separated out” and “[w]e didn’t talk about it,” Lucy demonstrates that the silences surrounding students with cognitive impairments and language differences are still prevalent in schools. Like Taylor above, Lucy notes the tensions between protecting individual students’ privacy while seeking not to further misunderstanding and stigma are still very real.

FBI Girl elicited other stories, besides the silences surrounding children with cognitive impairments. For at least two of us, Lauren and I, considering the culture of family silences in the 1960’s and 1970’s reminded us of the taboos surrounding infant loss. Often not spoken about, even within families, parents who suffered infant loss often had no outlets with which to cope with their grief, and so came up with various mechanisms in which to give meaning and understanding to why the otherwise incomprehensible could happen. Speaking for the first time about my grandmother’s loss, I shared the following narrative:

My father’s mother had a baby in her forties, and she lived for 3 days. She had Downs and a really significant heart defect, and in ’53 or ’54 there wasn’t much they could do. And my grandmother was recounting it years later, and she described a feeling of relief that she felt when her daughter passed. This was a 3 day old newborn. And my mother thought that was so cruel. And I said, ‘Mama, those babies were institutionalized. There were no mainstreaming programs. There were no Special Olympics. There was no Stand Up for Down campaign. Those babies were treated horribly, and there was a sense of “I don’t have to endure watching my child suffer.” I don’t think my grandmother was being cruel in the way we’d read that remark now. I think it was just brutal honesty, and she was a brutally honest person. (Heather, Meeting six, 5/15/13)

I recalled how my grandmother had never spoken to me of this baby, and had only rarely mentioned her birth and death once to my mother (who had later related the story to me).

Reading *FBI Girl* reaffirmed to me the culture of silence surrounding children with Down syndrome and other impairments; in reality, many of these children were institutionalized or kept within the home, given few educational and occupational options. Far from seeing her as a cruel

woman, I later understood my grandmother's sense of relief as her way of making sense of a tragedy, in contrast to my mother's own mother who had also lost an infant:

My other grandmother had this baby in 1964, I guess, and the baby was born with all sorts of birth defects and she lived like an hour. And the doctors had told my grandmother all along, my grandmother was in her forties, all along my grandmother had 4 other children, my mother was like 15 when this baby was born. And the doctors had told her, even without ultrasound technology, that the baby wasn't growing as it should. I think at five months gestation it was the size of 3 months. And they didn't think it would go full-term and they asked several times, cause doctors could do like a medical induction even before *Roe v. Wade*, and terminate the pregnancy. And my grandmother wouldn't hear of it. And then the baby died, and they whisked the baby away and my grandmother wasn't even awake from the ether, and she never saw her. And she was too sick to go to the baby's funeral; she contracted hepatitis in the hospital, and she never got to go to the baby's memorial or anything. She never saw that baby and she never got over it. (Heather, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

In contrast with my father's mother whose religious worldview gave her the comfort that her baby was "in a better place," my mother's mother had no such comfort and had no such closure after Karen's death. Unfortunately, the treatment my grandmother received at the hands of well-meaning doctors, who believed in the adage "out of sight, out of mind," was all too common, as Lauren related a similar incident from her own family:

You know my cousin was a twin, and his brother died during birth, the umbilical cord got wrapped around, and they took the baby and my aunt never saw him. My other aunt named him, they buried him, and my aunt never got to go the funeral or anything. He's my age. They didn't seal the records or anything, but they did the same thing to her; my aunt never got to see him or hold him or anything. And no one ever talks about him, either. [pause] Yeah. He'd be my age now. (Lauren, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

As we let Lauren's words hang over us, unable to speak for a few moments, it was clear that we were all feeling the weight of these final three stories. Indeed, while *FBI Girl* does not directly deal with infant loss, what is remarkable is the way that one text can present opportunities for the participants to speak to issues about which their families and communities had previously been kept silent, to consider the consequences of sharing others' secret stories,

and to remove the stigma from unimaginable experiences, and instead, find the possibility of healing through openness.

In this section, I have presented what I call Narratives of Vulnerability, narratives about issues which, for many people, are difficult to discuss among strangers: dieting, weight loss, eating disorders, cognitive impairment, infant loss, but which, situated in a text, the participants in this book study were willing to share. By situating ourselves within the lives of others we only knew through books, we found occasions to share parts of ourselves with one another that we might not have otherwise shared, had we simply met in an academic seminar or a professional teacher in-service seminar. In the following section, I turn away from personal narratives and instead examine the ways the participants discuss conflict using these books in their own classrooms.

Narratives of Conflict

In this section, I consider the ways the participants responded to the texts in the Commonplace Books, juxtaposed with the ways the participants discussed potential classroom uses for young adult memoirs; thus, this section speaks to the second research question, “How do the participants’ aesthetic responses to the text, in the book discussions and in the Commonplace Books, compare to the ways they talk about using young adult memoirs in their own future classrooms?” Using the Commonplace Books to express their appreciation for various passages, to ask questions, and to draw conclusions, most of the Commonplace Book responses were fairly plot and character- oriented. Coming from a reader-response framework as I have used, these responses are significant: they reveal the ways in which in-service and pre-service teachers make meaning out of texts, meanings they may potentially communicate to future students. However, the participants’ finding pleasure in reading the texts did not always translate into finding the

texts particularly useful in the classroom. As this section may illustrate, the participants pointed out various problems with teaching these particular memoirs (though not necessarily all young adult memoirs) in their classrooms. Thus, these narratives have been generated from the code families “Stories of Teaching and Learning” and “Reactions to the Text.” I also pulled from transcriptions of the Commonplace Books themselves. I call these Narratives of Conflict, not to describe any sort of literary conflict within the texts but to describe moments of conflict the participants often expressed; for, while the participants often articulated their enjoyment of the books we read, at the same time, they articulated a struggle trying to imagine ways in which they could use these particular texts in their own classrooms.

Hole in My Life

We began our study reading the text *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos, primarily because it was the shortest. While the participants had overall positive reactions to the text, they struggled somewhat to find some uses for it in the classroom, particularly because they feared it might be interpreted as glamorizing prison life. For example, Chad had the most enthusiastic response in our first book discussion:

As a high school student this would've been enthralling. I would've been completely immersed in this book. And, I would've been shocked a little bit. And I would've been I don't know, I would've questioned whether or not it was real or not, but I think that it's an autobiography would've made it a little bit scary. . . . But I thought it was pretty scary, thinking about me reading this as a high school student. It's a lot more relatable time period than most of what I read in high school. I read either fantasy or tried to read classics because I wanted to be a lit major. And every character that I read I had to find a way to put them in my world. And he's a lot closer to the world that I was in, in high school than most characters that I've read. (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

As the participant with the most recent secondary educational experience, Chad recalled the kinds of texts he read in his high school literature classes and imagined how he might have appreciated reading *Hole in My Life* as a student. Likewise, the comments he wrote in his

Commonplace Book reflect his book-group enthusiasm: “I think middle and high school students can relate,” he wrote on the second page, in which Gantos describes his “fear of being a target of irrational violence” that “haunted [him] day and night” (p. 4). Indeed, Gantos’s comparison of his high school to his prison experience resonated with Chad. When Gantos wrote, “My high school had been a former prison” (p. 23), Chad underlined the text and wrote in the margins, “Mine sure seemed that way.” And his enthusiasm did not wane. By the end of the text, Chad wrote, “I can’t say how much I wish I’d read this as an adolescent.”

Even as the only participant with no teaching or student teaching experience yet, Chad’s enthusiasm still extended to his thoughts about potential classroom uses for *Hole in My Life*. Rather than focusing on literary analysis, Chad saw *Hole in My Life* as an excellent prompt for the personal narrative:

It’s interesting that the books we’ve read become interesting writing assignments. Trying your own short story version of an autobiography. And, like, since I know how to tell a story, I find that interesting. I don’t know why. I just do. . . I wanted to be a writer ever since ninth grade, and I have friends who want to be writers, well, a handful of friends, and I know if anything, if any student wanted to be a writer, they could relate a lot to this book, because, I mean, I don’t know of anything, I don’t remember anything, any author’s insight on, like, wanting to be a writer. And I think it would’ve instilled some confidence in me. I probably would’ve studied English instead of mass comm, but yeah, I appreciated that most probably out of the whole book. Any student who is considering writing or is writing would get something...(Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Having recently changed his major to English education, Chad focused on the prose style of *Hole in My Life* and pointed out its potential for use in composition classes. As the personal narrative is a common writing assignment in secondary English classes, it is also, for many students, a frustrating assignment. Thus Chad suggested an important pedagogical strategy in the teaching of composition: to teach good writing, provide examples of good writing.

Taylor also used her background as a teacher to consider how *Hole in My Life* might be used. A former social worker, she made copious remarks in her Commonplace Book about the

narrator's state of mind, his "dehumanization" and his "loss of agency," and noted the constant school-to-prison-pipeline references in his text. "He lived in a hotel and attended a school that used to be a prison. What does that say about our public school system and its structure," she wrote, summing up the third chapter (Taylor, written communication in text margins, 4/10/13). She also noted his lack of relationships with those in authority. "He went to St. Croix to work with his father. Instead of "building" a relationship, they built things. He was seduced by the money into criminal actions. I'm not sure if he was after the money for selfish reasons or mental stability. The family seems cash starved a lot" (Taylor, written communication in text margins, 4/10/13). Using the Commonplace Book strategy mainly to summarize and draw conclusions about the narrative's plot and the character's development, Taylor focused a great deal on the character of Gantos and the poor choices he made, taking his memoir at face value, and worried about how Gantos's experience might be interpreted by students.

However, finding pedagogical uses for the text was more difficult for Taylor. Despite her appreciation for the text, she articulated some uncertainty about whether *Hole in My Life* would be appropriate for the average student:

I would use it more like to teach retrospection. Like predictions, foreshadowing, the English skills that some of them, that are lacking like so-called real-world experience, cause some of the students that I've taught, they have fathers and mothers who have gone to prison, who have gone for drugs, so they can relate to the story. They can pull those parallels out. Not necessarily 1971, 1972, but what this person did, what that person did. So if I don't have the classroom per se use, but like a counselor I can use it. Which is still technically teaching. I can teach them, well your parents did this, what do you think they should've done? Because I have a lot of children who are in foster care because their parents were in prison. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Again drawing from her background in counseling, Taylor was careful to consider how well the students would receive the text. While she considered that individual students may find it valuable, Taylor also worried that assigning it as an out-of-class reading without careful

preparation or thorough knowledge of each student's family background could potentially have negative consequences.

For instance, Taylor was concerned that Gantos's unusually short prison sentence and the fact that he did not experience physical violence first-hand may unintentionally water-down the realities of prison life, if not glamorize them altogether. Considering how some of her students had already spent time in juvenile detention centers, Taylor wondered if *Hole in My Life* would be too dated, as certainly prisons have become more populous, hence the potential for prison violence has increased:

I had a couple of those. I had a couple with ankle bracelets who'd pull up their pants to show they're on house arrest. For them it's like a badge of pride. This, I don't think this book would impact them or anything because, I feel he left so much out. For him [Gantos] being 15, 14 in 1971, they'd [the students] be like "err, that's old." They'd need something more current. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

On the other hand, in a follow-up interview, Taylor considered how some of her younger clients who were already incarcerated in juvenile detention centers may find reading *Hole in My Life* beneficial:

Hole in My Life, when I was counseling I would've used that with some of my little people. Because, one of them he actually did, he's in [a local juvenile detention center] now. He had what they call a violent temper. He just did and didn't believe there should be any consequences for his behavior. I just do it and nothing's gonna happen. Until people got tired of him hitting and stealing for no reason and pressed charges. And he sees it as consequences. So I think something like that woulda really jolted him, like, no you're not doing drugs but you're doing something that can hurt other people, like stealing, and wind up in jail for that. That would've been good for my counseling group. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13)

Beyond her concerns that the text may be too dated to be relevant for high school students, Taylor also commented that not all school districts would be supportive of the text:

I was thinking more of, if this was a book that was assigned it couldn't go in the public school because someone's gonna get sued. Cause they were glorifying the life. And certain books they don't allow you to bring to those environments. But

maybe a charter or private school you could bring it in. If I was teaching big children, like college-age children, it would be no problem. But assuming I could get it on campus I would have to make the kids bring it. Like use this as a lesson, tell them here's a book you should read. But it depends on the parish, too. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13)

Explaining that in the small, rural parish in which she taught, administrators might not have a problem with her using the text; she worried, however, that other districts might have stricter rules regarding what kinds of texts could be taught in schools, given the student-body make-up as well as district fears of parent protest.

Taylor was not the only participant to consider the specific school population that might benefit from *Hole in My Life*. Also a younger participant, Lucy considered how the book would be received by her peers when she was a high school student, as well as how the students she was currently student-teaching would interpret it.

I feel like, um, thinking about it now, when I was in high school, it would've been, it's too in the middle. For me individually, this probably would've been more than I needed, scare-wise. I would be like no, oh no. This has no relation to me. I was not attached to the drug culture, I was incredibly naïve in high school, but I went to [school name removed to preserve privacy] down the street, and it was a big drug and violence culture, but I think for our population it would've hit that spot in between. It's not dark enough or scary enough to be useful to many of the kids I talked to, or it's too much, (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Less afraid of offending parent bodies or being in conflict with school officials (in fact, Lucy said her school administration was rather “funky” and would likely be supportive of such a text), Lucy found the plot rather banal and wondered if current students would find it at all relevant. Nevertheless, as a gifted student now student teaching other gifted high school students, Lucy focused on Gantos's references to creativity and made numerous remarks in her Commonplace Book regarding Gantos's aspirations to be a writer. For Lucy, Gantos's candid discussions of his evolution as a writer were why it's actually useful!

Cause like, I love, I love the part about the sea turtle! The sea turtle that ended up in Hemingway's pool? Like, what is that even? But, just like, that excitement! Oh my god, it's like he thinks he's written something different, it's something meaningful. And then five minutes in he's like oh my God, this is terrible! What am I even doing? But that kind of, manic-depressiveness that I associate with being a teenager and being passionate about something maybe and not being really good about it. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Like Chad, Lucy read *Hole in My Life* as the story of a writer's development as a writer and minimized the plot events regarding his prison experience. As such, Lucy wondered if *Hole in My Life* might be better suited for creative writing students. In the margins of her text, she responded to Gantos's description of his creative writing class as "a formula to kill the creative impulse" (Personal communication, 4/10/13). Likewise, regarding Gantos's constant literary allusions, Lucy wondered if some sort of "post-reading strategy" might be created. Circling the epitaph by Oscar Wilde before the prologue opened, Lucy noted that it was "fitting for a writer to quote another writer" (Lucy, personal communication, 4/10/13).

I think this would be cool to use like a creative writing style? Kind of the way we did writing in it, but also like, because of the way he writes in his own journal, we talked about narratives a little bit. Have the kids- give them some options of different biographies and have them to write their own stories in them, around them. I like this writing in books. I thought it was interesting and fun. Kind of giving new meaning to what I was writing- like keep a journal in a book- it might drive them a little crazy. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Interestingly, while Lucy did not particularly enjoy *Hole in My Life* in its entirety, she, like Chad, was enthusiastic about its potential classroom uses to teach writing, particularly for creative students.

Like the other participants, Hannah's initial reaction to *Hole in My Life* was positive. While, as she reported, the plot of the novel did not thrill her, she mentioned the beautiful prose Gantos wrote as being valuable. Indeed, in the margins of her Commonplace Book she had underlined numerous passages that she said were well written, often annotating them with adjectives such as "awesome," "beautiful," and "well stated." Also like Chad and Lucy, Hannah

wondered if *Hole in My Life* might be useful as an example of good writing, even if using the book as a whole would not be feasible with younger students.

Um, I don't teach big people. So I can't use this book in whole areas. I could probably pull paragraphs or pages from it and use it. I do like the journaling idea. And also, getting the kids to- I don't think you can get the kids to- I do a lot of teaching writing, and I don't think you can just go "write me a biography" That would be the same that Gantos did- he couldn't. It took him however long, too. You can't just get them to write it. But you can have them read something- this is common core, too- and write something based on what you've read, pull out the text-centric things so if they read an autobiography and they can make connections to that, so either pull out parts of this that you can use, or if you're not using this book, I don't use this book but I got ideas from this book, using autobiography on younger children's levels, getting ideas from that. What are you connecting with? How do you connect this to your life? Get them to write autobiographical at that age. That's how I think I could use it... [later] I appreciated him and I know he was writing with a lot of experience, but he is a beautiful writer. And that's what I appreciated. Not necessarily the story. The story was okay. But just his writing, I'm like, ah what a beautiful idea. As I said I can use that for my kids because I can pull things out and say, "Look how descriptive this is!" So I appreciated his writings. (Hannah, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Not only was the prose exemplary, but Hannah also found pedagogical value in the idea of having her students journal about what they read, using reader-response-type methods such as asking them, "How do you connect this to your life?" As participation in the study had exposed Hannah to such reader-response techniques for the first time, she noted her excitement having found a new way to motivate students to write about themselves.

In a follow-up interview, Hannah elaborated on her plans to use *Hole in My Life*, especially as she had now read two other young adult memoirs:

I think I could use excerpts of *Hole in My Life* because I love the way he writes, to use to teach writing, even to my fourth graders. And to show that he started writing when he was younger. And um...*FBI Girl*. Now, I wouldn't use *Wasted* because I didn't appreciate the way she wrote, I didn't appreciate the content, that just wasn't a book for me. That I would use. But the other two, I thought they were- the literacy I could show, using their work, would definitely help my students become better writers. So what I'll do is I'll pull out, my plan to do this year is teach language within writing, and I'm gonna use the book we're reading in social studies to help with this, so I'll pull out excerpts and say look at this

section and tell me about the grammar and tell me, how did they use- if we're looking at quotation marks. So they'll be looking at paragraphs they've already seen so they won't have to concentrate on actually reading it that time; they'll be looking for something else. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/15/13)

However, as a teacher of younger students, Hannah worried about the appropriateness of the content in *Hole in My Life*. Remarking in her Commonplace book, "Why bring this in here?" when Gantos described an inmate as having been charged with sex crimes, and noting several times in her text that Gantos's lack of parental supervision enabled him to find so much trouble, Hannah indicated that she would be careful to choose excerpts that would not raise any controversy with parent groups or administration, especially in a conservative school district as the one in which she taught.

Thus, the participants approached *Hole in My Life* from different perspectives. While none of them were able to parallel their lives with Gantos's (in the previous section, none of the personal stories shared were done so while discussing *Hole in My Life*), several of the participants (Chad, Lucy, Hannah) felt that *Hole in My Life* may have pedagogical value, if not for its content, at least for its prose style that might be useful in teaching composition.

Wasted

While there may have been no participant consensus concerning any of the books we read, the text about which the participants felt most similarly was *Wasted*. The second book of the study, Marya Hornbachers' (1998) memoir of anorexia was the most controversial memoir, not because of its language, but because it seemed to be a "trigger text" for at least one participant, and the others worried about how some students would receive it. *Wasted* also presented one of the more interesting quandaries for me, as a researcher, to address. As the text that participants noted would be the most controversial to use in the classroom, it was also the text that generated both the most oral discussions during our book group meetings (these were

the longest meetings held) as well as the most comments written in the Commonplace Books. I can only speculate that participants, perhaps unknowingly, reacted to *Wasted* similarly to the ways their students might have reacted, and in this situation set aside their pedagogical notions of the text's usefulness (or uselessness) and instead, drew more from personal experience as they discussed the text and responded to it in writing.

Nevertheless, much of our discussion of *Wasted* was spent as participants vocalized their distaste for the text. Not finding any parallels with the author's life, and being reluctant to share personal stories in general, Hannah was the most vocal about her dislike for the text:

Uggg... she says she didn't write it for that [sympathy]. Did she write it to help people? But if she did, they're not gonna- You know, [looks at Heather] you say it's a cult classic, and maybe it is with people with eating disorders, and I didn't have one, and I understand that, so I didn't get it. I wouldn't use this book; I thought it was not well written and painful. And not because um, like, I understand that many of the- these are very serious topics and I think they should be discussed, but it was the way she over-generalized them I thought. (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Indeed, not having experienced the kind of extreme dieting that Hornbacher describes, Hannah had difficulty in personally relating or even sympathizing with the author's struggles. As she noted in her Commonplace Book, Hannah questioned the author's sincerity in her motivations to write the memoir and often questioned the author's parents desire to be present in the author's life. For example, when Hornbacher describes her father laughing at her childhood claims to being on a diet, Hannah circled the word "laughs" (Hornbacher, 1998, p. 11) and wrote "how is that funny?" in the text margins (Hannah, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Later, when Hornbacher described her childhood as a "happy" one (p. 17) Hannah circled the word and wrote "really???" again questioning the author's truthfulness. At the end of a later chapter, Hannah noted that Hornbacher's "mother ignored her. She's not a good mother" (Hannah, Written Communication in Text Margins, 3/20/13).

Unable to parallel her own life with the author's in any way, Hannah's Commonplace Book notes were scarce; there were fewer notes made during her second reading (written in red ink) than her first (written in pencil). As she noted on the title page regarding the second reading, "This book is really hard for me to read AGAIN"(Hannah, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13, original emphasis).

Lauren also noted her struggle with her second reading of *Wasted*. "I am not excited about reading this again," she wrote. "She is so self-destructive. At times, her accounts make me sick to my stomach. Some make me feel like I need to go back to a couple of bites of food a day. Really conflicted about not reading it at all" (Lauren, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Having already experienced *Wasted* as a "trigger text," Lauren considered how her own reaction to *Wasted* may be similar to others' reactions, especially students who may be vulnerable and subject to over-identifying with the memoir's narrator, despite Hornbacher's stated wishes for her readers not to do so (p. 7). Lauren was concerned that eating disorders among students are all too common, but are also often undetected. Therefore, as Taylor worried with *Hole in My Life*, Lauren worried that it would be difficult for a teacher to know whether *Wasted* was an appropriate text for his or her class.

I think impressionable, like impressionable people...they should not read it. You know what I mean? I'd read it and think, "Oh man. Maybe I should lay off the pizza." [laughs] I know she's crazy, but.. I'm growing my thighs a little bit. Maybe I should just not eat that cookie."(Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

Lauren made copious notes during her first reading of *Wasted*. Her Commonplace Book remarks reflect many of her comments addressed to the group during the book discussion. For example, when Hornbacher writes how puberty ushered her into the secret world of women for whom dieting is a normal part of womanhood, Lauren noted in the margins, "I feel that way all the time. Gotta keep my weight down" (written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Lauren

also compared her own mother to Hornbacher's, commenting, "I learned to critique my body from my mom, as well" (written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Also, like Hannah, Lauren critiqued Hornbacher's parents' response to her eating disorder, noting that "her parents seemed to avoid [the subject of sex]. I was raised hearing sex before marriage was an awful sin. So sad" (Lauren, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). As she illustrated with the personal stories she shared (discussed in the previous section), Lauren's strong identification with Hornbacher's struggle caused her to physically react to the text. Like Hannah, Lauren could not identify any pedagogical potential for *Wasted*.

While the other participants agreed that *Wasted* was not a book they personally enjoyed, Taylor, Lucy, and Chad attempted to find classroom uses for it. For example, as she did for *Hole in My Life*, Taylor once again drew on her background as a social worker; rather than recalling past teaching experiences, she considered her relationship with individual adolescents with whom she had counseled. She made copious remarks in her Commonplace Book noting the author's psychological state. "Her negative relationship with food began early," she noted in the first chapter. In a later chapter, she remarked that Hornbacher's "bulimia is a common way to self-regulate" (Taylor, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Also, as she did with *Hole in my Life*, Taylor considered what kinds of students may benefit from reading *Wasted*. During our first discussion of the memoir, Taylor considered particular individuals she had encountered while working as a counselor:

And this one would've been helpful when I was working with a certain set of teenage girls we had, they were recovering substance abusers. And they ran a group home on Lover's Lane, and this would've been helpful to two of them because one of them did have an eating disorder, and one was starting because they called her fat, and she was starting to have that body dysmorphic thing going, I don't know how it actually turned out for her because they found out she was pregnant before she left so we don't know the outcome for her. But it was really starting to be a problem for her because she was trying to figure out ways she eat

and not gain weight. So this would've been a really good book for her to read.
(Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

She reiterated this point later in a follow-up interview. As she did with *Hole in My Life*, Taylor located a specific audience for the memoir rather than advocating assigning it to a large group:

Wasted? It still would have been my girls in my counseling group, I worked with substance abuse girls and some of them had eating disorders for whatever reason, so that would've been a good text to read especially since the character went on to write about her substance abuse journey. So put the two texts together because one, she always thought she was heavy, and I'd tell her, you're not heavy, you just have the traditional shape I would die for, but she always cause the girls was like, "Your butt's too big, your hips too big," so she was always dieting and she dieted herself into an eating disorder. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13)

Using *Wasted* to give struggling young women the opportunity to consider their own thought processes might be dangerously similar to the pathological thinking of *Wasted*'s Hornbacher, Taylor recommends a reader-response method, specifically an "embodied reading" to ask readers to locate areas in their own lives they may need to reconsider, as well as ways they might learn to resist such damaging thinking.

Unlike Taylor, who initially endorsed *Wasted*, at first Lucy was reluctant to find uses for *Wasted* despite finding some personal as well as academic interest in the topic, and enjoying gaining insights into Hornbacher's description of anorexia as an extension of a cultural pathology that associates low body weight with moral goodness and physical attractiveness. Indeed, her Commonplace Book was filled with questions and comments about the cultural construction of thinness. "Why is it great to be thin? Why do girls prove their "greatness" by being thin rather than something else," she queried in her text and again with the group. Unlike the other participants, there were parts of *Wasted* Lucy said she enjoyed reading, even if she felt that, as a whole, the memoir was far too long (Lucy, written communication in text margins, 3/20/13). Initially Lucy felt that the audience for *Wasted* would be far too narrow to be

appropriate for classroom use. Because of its length, as well as its stark language and unresolved internal conflict, Lucy at first wondered whether *Wasted* was appropriate for adolescents to read at all, especially as vulnerable readers might misinterpret the author's intentions:

So I think if a person who is in the same situation that it's easy to misread what an author is trying to tell you, especially when they say it in 100 words when they could've said it in 10. It was interesting to read this from the outside, but I don't know, if I was in her position, if I would've gotten the things that I got from it, at all. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Indeed, upon re-reading *Wasted*, Lucy pointed out other factors that might make it less-than-ideal for classroom use.

This doesn't feel like a teen book. And all I know like a huge chunk of it is her youth and...even she says it, she never was a kid, or whatever, from, like age five on, she was dressing up and wearing lipstick and going on stage. I would not- I definitely know some teenagers who relate to this? But in a large group, this would not go over well. Or people would just be very irritated. Because it's very wordy. And I think it's written at the level...I, I would not give this to my seniors at [school name removed]. I think it would go over their heads. And they would've been discouraged. Even if they could've read it, and I *think* some could, they would not have. It would've been too discouraging. Just the density." (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

As Lucy considered what kinds of books adolescents generally read in schools, she found *Wasted* to be a stark contrast. But as we discussed other books we personally read as adolescents, Lucy reconsidered:

I think young adult books are- well I think there's some truth to the "what the parents run don't to the school board about," but I think more importantly a young adult book is what speaks to a young adult. It's written specifically... for this weird age range.... where you're kind of stuck in the middle of things. It doesn't have to be, young adults can read adult books, and I think that's fine, but if it's a young adult book, I think specifically young adult books need to be geared to speaking to young adults in this kind of liminal space. . . . See my parents aren't, they aren't from here. They're from Kansas and Georgia. And they're scientists. So we always had the, *Where do I Come From* books. For as long as I can remember. My sister is 6 years older than me, and we had the, *This is What Sex Is*. We didn't talk about it, but there were books around. In case we wanted to know. So, so I don't know. I don't know. I'm kinda reassessing that this is not a teen book. I mean, it's not a real teen book, but it definitely approaches those things that need to be approached for teens. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

Noting a striking contrast between the kinds of books adolescents are assigned in school and the kinds of books they choose to read on their own, Lucy reconsidered her initial dismissal of *Wasted* as “not a teen book,” because the text broaches issues common to adolescent experience without offering easy answers or pat solutions. Nevertheless, she maintained her position that though *Wasted* may be beneficial for individual adolescents, it is not an appropriate text for students as a whole.

While he was unable to attend the book group discussions about *Wasted*, Chad also noted that while he gained significant insights into the culture of eating disorders while reading *Wasted*, the text prompted him to cull his initial enthusiasm for young adult memoirs as a whole:

I think it helped the way I see teen autobiographies, and I think they should be taught and selected. It didn't change my view that they should be taught, because I think they're very beneficial, but it did change my view about the way they're selected to be taught. And it's because, I've tried to consider after reading this book, how high school students read books, and what they take from books. Before you're taught to read a book in any other way, how you take in any material or form of art or expression, and it's through a reflection of yourself. You examine everything through yourself and your own personal experiences, and um, in that way, I think this book would be helpful for, um, teens to read as far as relating to how this girl went through puberty. How this girl experienced her childhood. I mean, this book really is an examination of her life psychologically in a way that many people never examine their lives. (Chad, Interview, 5/17/13)

For Chad, the topic of eating disorders was less familiar initially; however, as I discussed in the previous section, he used the text to make sense of body image attitudes and dieting behaviors held by at least two of his female friends. His interest in *Wasted* as being a text of self-examination is reflected in the notes he made in his Commonplace Book. For example, when Hornbacher described the body as “no more than a costume. . . [that] can be changed at will,” Chad responded, “This is relatable at every level, to every human being in America.” He also noted identifying with Hornbacher’s volatile relationship with her parents, remarking, “All very relatable to my childhood” (Chad, written communication in text margins, 5/17/13). Despite his

personal interest and enjoyment of the text, however, Chad cautioned whether *Wasted* would be appropriate in the classroom and worried that impressionable students might not see the text as a cautionary, but as a how-to manual for anorexia. As with Lucy, Chad struggled with the conflict between his personal enjoyment of the text and his inability to find pedagogical uses for it.

FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code

Maura Conlon-McIvor's *FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack my Father's Code* was the final book read in the book group. Following the second reading of *Wasted*, several of the participants requested to extend the study by one more book. *FBI Girl* was met with an overwhelmingly positive response by the participants.

Just as she was the most vocal in her dislike for *Wasted*, Hannah was most apparent for her enthusiasm about *FBI Girl*. "I loved this book! I almost texted you when I was done with this to say 'thank you for ending on a good note.' You know, 'cause this one I really enjoyed. I will actually USE this one." (Hannah, personal communication, 5/20/13). As a social studies teacher, Hannah's interest in *FBI Girl* focused on its historical context, and she noted how the particular historical moment, the late 1960's, was key to understanding the motivations of several of the characters.

I love how she wove in the beginning of the women's movement. 'Cause that was really the beginning of the women's movement when women were doing things like that, and family dynamics were changing. Fathers were, like the gender roles started to blur, and fathers were taking on more nurturing roles and he was so resistant to that and she just put her foot down. Like that one passage where she said, "What do you think your other children have to say?" that broke my heart. (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Indeed, Hannah's Commonplace Book includes references to other historical artifacts in the text, such as the family photos that begin each chapter, and a copy of a congratulatory letter to her father from J. Edgar Hoover on the occasion of her birth. For Hannah, situating the memoir as the story of a family during a particular historical era of change gave the text potential

for use in the social studies classroom. In fact, Hannah's interest in this text inspired her to purchase several class sets of other young adult memoirs that she planned to use the following year as she began to teach in a new school. Hannah did, however, mention one potential issue that could arise when teaching *FBI Girl*, which was the narrator's use of the term "retarded" to characterize her younger brother with Down syndrome.

I mean, I mean me too. Ooff!! You forget stuff like that. That's why it's good to go back and read a memoir because you remember like, "Ooh, that was okay then." You gotta wonder what it'll be like in 50 years, what's taboo to say then which is okay to say now. (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

As an adult, Hannah understood that the narrator's choice of terminology was in keeping with the common terminology of her childhood. Nevertheless, she wondered if younger students would be able to understand that meanings and connotations of words change over time. Might reading *FBI Girl* with young students inadvertently perpetuate the use of what is a hurtful term in our culture? Therefore, Hannah's initial enthusiasm for *FBI Girl* waned when I asked her about pedagogical uses for the text in a follow-up interview:

I don't mind character-centered stories for read alouds. Um, not sure I would use it for fourth grade. Um, and I wouldn't use it for my classroom because I try to get books my students would relate to, and they're not going to relate to that one. And I'm not saying that I wouldn't do anything that wasn't out of the box so they would learn, but that one I wouldn't use in my classroom. [pause]. I would pull an excerpt from it, but I wouldn't use the whole thing. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/16/13)

Lauren agreed with Hannah's concerns but also shared her enthusiasm for the text. Her Commonplace Book remarks were filled with parallels to her own life, such as an aunt who, like the narrator's teacher, "would make the children miss recess until they could learn to write their letters in cursive," and a father, who like Conlon-McIvor's, "gets mad when he thinks I'm being unsafe" (Lauren, written communication in text margins, 5/14/13). While she enjoyed reading *FBI Girl*, citing it as her favorite of the three books we read, she was concerned that reading *FBI*

Girl might draw unwanted, negative attention to children with Down syndrome who had been mainstreamed into her class:

The only issue I'd have about using this in the classroom, I'm thinking about my last classroom and all of my inclusion kids that I have, and they talk about Joey drooling all the time and everything like that, and they look over at the little girl I have who was drooling. You know what I'm saying? I think that's a big issue I would have. I would not want them to use that word for another child in my class. (Lauren, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Like Hannah, Lauren taught students in elementary grades, and even though the reading level of *FBI Girl* would not be too difficult, Lauren wondered whether young students would have the maturity to deal with its content, or whether the text might make easy targets of her students with cognitive differences.

However, other participants also focused on the historical moment of the text but were less concerned on the impact its word-choice would have on readers. Taylor, who had paralleled the text, particularly the father, with her own upbringing, made several remarks in her Commonplace Book that reflected several of the stories she had told in the previous section. For instance, she noted that the father was “the epitome of masculinity” and “not active in the parenting process” while the mother was “your typical stay-at-home Mom-type” (Meeting Six, 5/15/13). Thus, as she had in the stories she shared with the group, for Taylor, part of the pleasure of reading the text was making references to the ways gender roles are created and performed.

Also for Taylor, a special education teacher, reading a memoir about cognitive difference set in the 1960's might help older students understand how the meaning of words change over time:

I would use um, excerpts out of it, like um, I like language studies, like where you go back and look at the words. Like some of the words she used were like older words, to show how that word was used in that context and how it began and then how it's used in the present context. It would have to be middle school age. Like

11-13. 'Cause I don't think the elementary students would really get it, and I don't think the high school students would be all that interested in it. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13)

For Taylor, helping students understand the history of the term is what is most valuable about reading *FBI Girl*. While she was less enthusiastic about its plot, she felt that using a language study showing the evolution of the usage of the term, similarly to how teachers might approach *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, would best help students make informed choices about the words they chose to use.

Lucy, a pre-service teacher working with middle school students during the time of the study, echoed Taylor's ideas about the language of the text, and said that *FBI Girl* might be suitable for the middle school English classroom. Her Commonplace Book comments were filled with questions about the family life, and she underlined copious passages that she felt were well written and demonstrated and excellent use of imagery. For Lucy, neither the descriptions of the character Joey nor the text's use of the "r-word" were necessarily reasons against its inclusion in the classroom. In fact, a careful presentation of the text might even prove beneficial.

But I think if you, you're careful, using this book, it could help with that. Cause I went back to visit my middle schoolers today, and they were using "retarded" left and right. And you fuss at them and they don't understand, but in lots of ways you see the reactions, the different reactions people had to Joey. And it hurt when people were so overt, like, "Oh my god, I'm so sorry." How that confused her especially when she was younger, less when she was older. If you talk about it, and they used queer a couple times, get kids aware of how hurtful these words are. Because I don't think they realize. My middle schoolers are good kids; I don't think they want to hurt each other's feelings except by poking at each other. But they're good kids and I don't think they really know what that word means. Or maybe they do, and I'm being too nice. (Lucy, Meeting Six, 5/14/13)

For Lucy, the use of the "R-word" was all-too-prevalent in her teaching context, even though some students only used the word out of habit without considering its full connotations. While she did not enjoy *FBI Girl*, citing it as "not her favorite" though she did "really like the imagery, the weirdness of the imagery and the way it was written," she did feel that it would be

particularly suited for the middle school English classroom to help students learn to show sensitivity and compassion towards others with differences, and to be more mindful of the hurtful stereotypes their words might perpetuate.

Overall, the participants enjoyed their reading of *FBI Girl*. Despite its use of the term “retarded,” (accurate for the time period), as these narratives illustrate, the participants connected personally with various aspects of the book and, with one exception (Lucy) cited it as their favorite book read during the semester. The use of the word “retarded,” as well as certain characterizations of the younger brother, were cited as potentially problematic for some of the participants (Hannah, Lauren), but for Taylor and Lucy, they were simply opportunities for “teaching moments,” in which students and teachers together could engage in honest, candid conversations regarding particularly hurtful (though all-too-common) words and how the language we use can potentially further the marginalization of others.

Narratives of Insight

In this section, I look at the ways the participants responded to the practice of re-reading and recording responses to texts in Commonplace Books. Because this study is framed by reader-response theories, particular those of Denis Sumara, the candid responses participants made in their discussions and in their texts are integral to whether or not they valued the experience of re-reading a book and logging their responses in a Commonplace Book. In addition, this section considers how using a Commonplace Book might be a form of written autobiographical reflection, useful in teacher education programs as well as in secondary education classrooms. This section speaks to the third research question: What might teachers learn about themselves as readers from the process of reading and re-reading texts and keeping their responses in Commonplace Books? The narratives I generated in this section have been

constructed by responses categorized in the codes Literacy Narratives and Stories about Writing in Commonplace Books.

I found that overall, the participants responded favorably to the practice of re-reading texts and logging their responses, two practices to which they were previously unaccustomed. I call these responses Narratives of Insight, using Sumara's (2002) definition of insight as that which "emerges through the hard work of interpreting one's relations with people, to objects people have made, including narratives that describe and explain experience. . ." (p. 5). Indeed, I argue that as teachers better understand their relationships to particular narratives found in young adult memoirs, and as they understand how these relationships might change over the course of multiple readings and be strengthened through the practice of using some method to log their responses (such as in a Commonplace Book), they might be better equipped to understand whether a particular memoir might be suited for their classrooms. I subdivide these Narratives of Insight into two sub-sections: insights gained from the practice of reading and re-reading, and insights gained from the practice of logging responses in the Commonplace Book.

On Reading and Re-reading

I was surprised to find that most of the participants were unaccustomed to the practice of reading and re-reading a text (unless done so for academic purposes), but I discovered that in doing so, their relationship with the book changed. Before the study, for example, Hannah had only re-read parts of academic texts to find evidence to support her arguments. Discussing her second reading of *Hole in My Life*, the first text that we read and re-read together, Hannah explained,

Like I'll read for quotes, I'll be like, "Oh I need to remember a quote," but I don't remember the last book that I read cover to cover twice. And so I did with this one and it was interesting because I saw more, um, foreshadowing and more, well, could be, could be not, and it's tough with this one because it's fiction-

nonfiction, like it's his life and I know he probably just threw stuff in there, so I'm like, did he put that in there to foreshadow, so um, and I noticed the yellow color a lot more this time. So I noticed a lot more this time than I did last time. And I thought it's because...well I would look at my notes from last time and I would add to them, I don't know. Maybe it's a good thing, I know I like to read lots of books, I don't watch movies more than once, either. You know, well there's like cheesy movies that I'll watch more than once, but usually no. I watch it once, it's done in my world. (Hannah, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Hannah found that during her first reading of *Hole in My Life*, she had read the text as a casual reader, encountering the plot and the characters for the first time. On her second reading, however, she began to read more skeptically, keeping in mind the text's pedagogical potential and making more notes about possible literary devices she might point out to her students, such as foreshadowing and symbolism. By the end of the study, Hannah had read and re-read three books. I asked her again if she found the process of re-reading valuable, and she responded,

Oh, completely, I think you should re-read things. But I always find there's so many more good books to read, so why go back and, you know? But there's just so much stuff out there. I know I could get more out of it the second time around, I mean, think of *Alice in Wonderland*; do you think you're gonna get everything the first time, Sometimes I'm like, "Oh!" I did that with the books I read twice. So I completely see that you're gonna get so much more out of the book. But I'm like, but I could be reading another book. Cause I'm like a voracious reader; I ordered like 8 books yesterday on Amazon to read. So, you know. (Hannah, Personal interview, 5/16/13)

Finding herself torn between valuing the experience of re-reading a text and desiring to move on to another book, Hannah broached a dilemma that many teachers face, especially in a fast-paced curriculum in which quantity is often substituted for quality. How might teachers use a re-reading process in a curriculum with their students, especially when meeting all of a curriculum's prescribed benchmarks is already difficult?

Likewise, Chad also remarked that re-reading books was not a habit of his. When we finished our initial discussion of *Hole in My Life*, I explained that we would read another text

next (Hornbacher's *Wasted* (1998) and then revisit *Hole in My Life* once again, this time looking to see how our initial impressions of the text might have changed. Chad was skeptical at first:

I don't think I've ever, um I don't think I've read a book twice in my life. I've watched many movies twenty times in a row. Yeah, I watch movies over and over and try to learn all the lines [group laughter]...and and, like all the camera angles, but uh [group laughter]. (Chad, Meeting Two, 2/20/13)

Upon reading the book for a second time, Chad reconsidered his initial skepticism and described how his experience of reading had changed from one reading to the next:

It kinda allowed me to step back a little bit, because I already knew what was going to happen, I already knew the story, and kinda considered myself in high school, what I would get from this book. And one thing I got from it, one thing I never considered at all in high school, if I considered it, it was an abstract idea, and that was going to jail and what prison would be like. All I know that it would be like was based on the few movies and TV shows that I did watch with that experience, but I don't think I heard a story from anyone's perspective about going to prison. (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Having already read for the plot during the first reading, Chad found that his second reading of *Hole in My Life* allowed him to better situate himself personally within the text and consider what kind of effect it might have had on a younger version of himself. Chad found that the book affected him more strongly the second time he read it, as he realized that all during his own high school experience, he had never heard anyone relate a prison narrative out loud, even as there were students in his high school who had already spent time in various detention centers. As his second reading of *Hole in My Life* concretized the prison experience more vividly for him, Chad's enthusiasm for the text's use in secondary education only increased.

Like Chad, Taylor also had a very different experience reading *Hole in My Life* the second time, but unlike Chad, her enthusiasm for the book waned somewhat, as she found herself less willing to believe the narrator's account as truthful.

My second reading, I had more questions I guess, after I was finished, like when he was talking about his friend Lucas who was in the bathroom and had gotten raped, like how do I know that's your friend? What actually happened to Lucas or

did that really happen to you and you just decided to leave it out the book? [later] Cause like, I'm sure men get raped in prison all the time, why is he the exception to the rule? To where it was like, oh it happened to my friend not me. And the guy had told him there was a tax on it. So like, pretty much like you gonna pay your taxes. So I can't imagine that he didn't get approached more vigorously. So I don't know how much he's leaving out to make it seem more than what it is. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Finding holes in the narrator's account, Taylor again wondered whether *Hole in My Life* would be at all relevant to secondary education students, especially as she questioned the authenticity of the account related and wondered if its pro-education, anti-crime message might just backfire. Likewise, Lucy was equally skeptical when she encountered the text *Hole in My Life* for the second time. While Lucy has made a habit of re-reading her favorite books, she had not re-read a book and found that her impression of it changed significantly until she encountered *Hole in My Life*:

I won't say that I don't re-read books like at all. There are like 10 books that I re-read fairly regularly, but pretty much everything else, I'm like the first time through, and then I'm done. I found my second time through I was a lot more skeptical. Like I did see a lot more foreshadowing, but I didn't see that, I saw that as like, aw man, how much is him being a kid and him.... So much there were times I thought are these grown up thoughts or are these teenager thoughts? These seem like grown up thoughts to me. So I was more skeptical my second time around; that was kind of strange. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Also wondering how much of Gantos's account was influenced by adult hindsight (approximately thirty years had passed between the time of the event and the time of his writing), Lucy mused whether too much of the adult Gantos had been imposed onto the narrative. While she said that she generally trusted narrators, Lucy also pointed out that any memoir is simply a performance. While narrators may draw from memory and even use other sources to aid their writing, such as journals and letters, a memoir is never a complete reconstruction of events; rather, it is a reconstruction of one's memory of those events.

On the other hand, while all other participants said they were only able to skim *Wasted* the second time around, Lucy found that reading the text for a second time only strengthened her insights into the character's subjectivity:

I don't, I don't know if this is just the way I read books or it's my own personality, but I have a tendency to trust the narrator, pretty much implicitly, especially with an autobiography, especially when she's this crass. So like I never, pretty much, she never, she never talks about why she did stuff, I just took it as that, she never necessarily said about she did this to get her parents' attention, er, I don't know, she kinda talks around it sometimes. I thought it was really interesting. I thought it was funny, and there were other reactions in the group, but like I said a couple times in the meetings, I think people's brains are really interesting. People who label themselves, or the world labels as "broken" or messed up in some way, I think it's cool to see- at least what they want you to see. I wouldn't say that's really what's going on in there, but it's what they want you to think is. (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/13)

For Lucy, re-reading *Wasted* allowed her to get into what she called that "deep insideness," a moment of insight into another person's experience with which she could really empathize.

Despite her moments of frustration with the length of the text, Lucy found her second reading valuable because it enabled her to truly understand the thought processes of a narrator whose life experiences were not, after all, so different from her own.

On Writing in Commonplace Books

As with the practice of re-reading books, the participants also noted that they were unused to writing in the margins of texts. I gave them very few directions on marking in texts, only telling them that I wanted them to keep a record of their thoughts, impressions, predictions, in the text because I wanted the process to be as spontaneous as possible. I found that for most of the participants, keeping a Commonplace Book was a learned discipline that took some time getting used to; however, once the participants saw how they could track their own responses quickly and easily, many remarked that the practice would be useful in their own classrooms.

For Hannah, writing in the text for the study was the first time she had ever written in a book. Even when studying or reading for her own research, Hannah used post-its to mark passages she deemed useful. Thus, actually recording her own reflections in a text took some time for her to appreciate. After trying it for the first reading, *Hole in My Life*, Hannah returned to our book group still feeling somewhat skeptical about the process:

It's very hard for me to write in a book. And so, and then I second guessed, what if what I wrote was stupid, what if I shouldn't have highlighted that? I'm like, this is just a thought for me. So then I like, I wouldn't write for like 10 pages or 15 pages, and I'm like, I'm not writing!! And then I'll be like, oh no, I'm supposed to be writing, or then I just highlight everything, cause I like to give good quotes...I underlined a lot of quotes but I didn't really explain them. Maybe in the second reading I'll say what I mean by it, but. Since I just underlined what I liked and I didn't say why I liked it, it didn't take, it really didn't take long, after I got over..using a pencil in the books. Oh we weren't going for pen! We weren't going for pen! Maybe second time around. . . .(Hannah, Meeting Two, 2/20/13)

Not knowing how much or how little to write, Hannah felt the process was rather forced; she worried quite a bit about “doing it wrong,” and found herself being too caught up in the reading to stop and reflect. After reading *Wasted* for the first time, a book she vocally disliked, she shared a similar experience:

Really, I wrote barely, not much in the end. Not much in the beginning, not like the other one. And I didn't find any “oh my gosh, she said that really well.” I didn't find any of those. Like. Just blah... [laughs] (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

For Hannah, logging responses in a Commonplace Book was less of an experience of personal reflection than it was a way for her to make note of her own reading habits and keep track of particular passages she found important or noteworthy. As such, Hannah considered modifying the Commonplace Book method to use with her younger students to aid with reading comprehension. In fact, she was already using a modified approach to help facilitate book discussions with her students:

But I do, I do require, even my 2nd graders, I have them pull out three, when we, when we read a chapter, I make them pull out three things they liked in that chapter. So they don't have to write it, but they do have to pull it. It helps them. I did one week with we did one book I tried it with, and one week without. And they said they actually liked it, it helps them remember things we could talk about things they really liked. (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

By the end of the study, Hannah felt more comfortable with the process for herself and, since her students could not write in books that belonged to their school district, she had developed ways for her students to modify the process in her classroom. She explained her plans to me in a follow-up interview:

So what I'm going to let them do is use sticky notes? So anytime they want- and I ordered sticky notes, so I have a plethora of sticky notes, which is what I do in my books, because until this process, like now I've actually written in a text book, I'm like "ooohh..." I finally like broke the, yeah. So thank you. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/16/13)

For Hannah, part of the value of participating in the study, other than being introduced to a new genre of books, was learning to modify her own reading habits to enhance her comprehension and coming up with ways to apply these strategies to her classroom.

Lauren, however, was more reluctant:

I feel it would be hard for a good reader to do this. Like, a good reader to write as they go. Mostly 'cause I feel like it hurts them, like they wanna go head and just read it, and this slows them down and they would not want to read. I feel like it would be a chore to write and read, like- you know what I'm saying? (Lauren, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

For Lauren, having to stop and annotate seemed to artificially slow down an otherwise eager reader. Trying to get used to the process herself, Lauren worried that introducing a Commonplace Book method in her classroom might backfire, frustrating readers more than benefitting them.

Like Hannah and Lauren, Chad was also new to the idea of writing in books, finding the practice unfamiliar as he had previously been instructed against it:

That was the first time I ever wrote in a book. I always thought you should never write in books, and then you told us we had to. Well not *had* to, but you encouraged us to... Anyway, after that, I wrote in a book for the first time and I was just like you, I was like, this is wrong, everything about it is wrong...[(tape blip] little rebel, I was like..[group laughs] write in it! (Chad, Meeting Two, 2/20/13)

Having done so for the first time, Chad found it a positive experience, though as he continued to log his responses, he decided it was easier to use a small notebook and log his responses in a more conventional, journaling style. On the other hand, Taylor was quite used to writing in texts (the only participant who had experienced this process before) and experimented with several ways of keeping her own Commonplace Books.

I had to be trained to write in books. Coming out of high school you can't write in a book without having to pay them money, but in my first year of college one of my professors said, "I don't want to see any pencils and paper; I want to see your pen hit this book" I was like Pen? In my book? I paid for this book? So I had to learn to write in my books. But now, the books in my house, you can tell the ones I've really, really read, because they have writing all over them, even the binding. Cause I ran out of room. But I had to learn to write in the books it was okay, it wasn't going to kill the pages if I wrote in it. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Emphasizing that all her books have writing all over them, Taylor showed how what was first rather awkward and difficult for her became a regular reading habit, both for her personal enjoyment of books and for her academic study of them. Likewise, as a reflective practice, Lucy found keeping the Commonplace Book rather helpful. Having not responded to books in this way before, she nevertheless adapted to the practice rather quickly and kept regular, copious notes in her Commonplace Books for all three texts. For instance, when we discussed the text *Wasted*, she explained:

I wrote a lot. It- it was just so interesting. She's [the author] so weird and so...like especially in the beginning there was so much I could relate to, even having never, just like a strangeness in relationships with any, with food. Strange, it's slow going, whether annotating or not. But I did, I did find some stuff that I thought was poignant at least, maybe not in the way she wrote it, but just in the ideas, like oh. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

For Lucy, the process of annotating (as she called it) in her Commonplace Book was a means for her to keep track of her own responses, but also to make her reading a bit slower, more deliberate. She described how several times, she would find herself so engaged in the text that she had not annotated for several chapters, and then would stop, re-read, and consider, “What’s important here? What am I missing?” (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

On the other hand, Lucy did not find the practice as easy when she read *Hole in My Life* for the second time. Perhaps because she connected with Hornbacher’s *Wasted* more than she did Gantos’s text, she found that she had less to annotate in the latter text, and that the process was more laborious and time-consuming than it was beneficial:

Going back through the second time I was really frustrated. Like, I didn’t respond to this book with a lot of writing honestly. I underlined things that I liked, I left little notes. But there wasn’t, I didn’t connect very well. Reading through the second time, when his dad’s all like, “Oh man, that girl had a baby when she was nine,” Dad is a lying piece of shit. What is wrong with Dad? Why is he doing this? He is making that crap up. There is no way he, and why is he teaching his child to stereotype so strongly, like to the point where nothing else is important. I didn’t like Dad the second time through. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Perhaps because she had two very different experiences with the process, Lucy was rather ambivalent about how keeping a Commonplace Book might benefit secondary education students:

I have middle schoolers right now and I don’t know, I don’t know if you could, you’d have to train them to do it. Like I don’t know if they would do it, I don’t know even if you forced them to write in a book or a journal if they would do it without sabotaging themselves. . . . [later]...Maybe for older kids it would be useful to them cause they’re willing to think about how they think, but these middle schoolers- they do not like to think how they think at all, they don’t like meta-cognition at all, when I ask them why they think about something, why they gave such an answer... (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

For Lucy, keeping a Commonplace Book requires both discipline to stop, think, and annotate and also the willingness to engage in meta-cognition, to think about prior assumptions and impressions and consider how they might be changed. Lucy wondered if younger students would

be willing to engage in the process, though she emphasized that for herself and possibly for older (high school) students, it could be a worthwhile experience.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed three major narratives that I generated from six group discussions, 5 individual interviews, 3 sets of Commonplace Books from the five participants, and several emails. After coding all the comments made during the book discussions, classifying codes under various code family names, I pulled together three large narratives that I believe speak to the three research questions that are presented in chapters one, three, and at the beginning of this chapter. I have classified these narratives under three categories that I have called Narratives of Vulnerability, Narratives of Conflict, and Narratives of Insight. To address the first research question, What kinds of stories do teachers tell?, I found that teachers and pre-service teachers are willing to situate themselves in these young adult memoirs, find, and share intimate details of their lives, regardless of whether they personally liked the book. As many initial responses were personal and aesthetic, the process of engaging with re-readings, as well as keeping a record of their responses, led to more pedagogical strategizing on the part of the participants. For instance, when I considered the second research question regarding how the participants might use young adult memoirs in their own classrooms, I found that often a participant's personal like or dislike for a book had little bearing on how he or she planned to use that book in a classroom. Many other variables, such as the book's content-appropriateness, the language, and the emotional and intellectual maturity of the particular students who would be encountering the book for the first time played a far greater role in whether a participant said he or she would use a young adult memoir in the classroom. Finally, as I considered the third research question, What the participants said they learned about themselves through the process

of re-reading and keeping logs of responses in the texts, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that overall, the participants valued the experience of re-reading a text in order to gain further insight into their own responses, understanding better why they did or did not find use for a particular text in their classroom. Moreover, most of the participants reported that the process of keeping various types of responses recorded in the texts of their young adult memoirs enhanced their reading of the texts, though applying such a practice in their own curriculums might bring about some logistical difficulties (such as students not being able to write in a book owned by a school district) that might be hard to overcome. As sites of autobiographical reflection, both the book group and the use of the Commonplace Book facilitated several types of responses from the participants, ranging from the personal, to the aesthetic, to the pedagogical.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How does one conclude a narrative study, especially when the relationships and rapports developed are ongoing? Several months after we read our final memoir together, I met with the participants once again. Informally, over pizza and sodas, we caught up with one another, discussed how the new school year was going, and enjoyed one another's company. I had asked them to meet with me for two reasons. First, I wanted to give them one final opportunity at member-checking, the process in which the participants look at the narrative analysis and give input, making any necessary deletions or modifications of information they deemed too personal or revealing. Second, I also hoped we might be able to discuss their possible uses of young adult memoirs in their new classrooms. The conversation we had, however, was rather unexpected. Rather than discussing the use of young adult memoirs in the classroom, we discussed the difficulties of including these texts in an accelerating, already jam-packed Common Core Curriculum. With the participants' most recent experiences in mind, in this final chapter, I shall review the goals of my study, summarize my findings, discuss their implications, and make recommendations for further study.

Purpose and Goals of the Study

The purpose of my study was to examine how teachers and pre-service teachers discuss young adult memoirs, what they might learn about themselves in the process of reading and reflecting in book discussions and in a Commonplace Book they kept, and how they might use young adult memoirs in classrooms including, but not limited to, English language arts (ELA) classrooms. To find out, I gathered together a group of teachers and pre-service teachers from various backgrounds, ranging from special education to social studies education to English education, and formed a book club in which we read three young adult memoirs: *Hole in My Life*

by Jack Gantos, *Wasted* by Marya Hornbacher, and *FBI Girl: How I Learned to Crack My Father's Code* by Maura Conlon-McIvor. Guiding the study were the following research questions:

1. What types of stories do in-service and pre-service teachers tell about themselves when they engage with young adult memoirs?
2. How do the participants' aesthetic responses to the text, in the book discussions and in the Commonplace Books, compare to the ways they talk about using young adult memoirs in their own future classrooms?
3. What might teachers learn about themselves as readers from and through the process of reading and re-reading texts and keeping their responses in Commonplace Books?

As I sought answers to the research questions guiding this study, I also hoped that the participants would, in the meantime, be introduced to an underused genre (Kirby & Kirby 2010) of texts in the classroom, and I eagerly anticipated that they might even be able to incorporate some of the texts, or similar texts, into their curricula in the following school year. The participants agreed to attend a book discussion for each reading of the text, and in addition, to keep a log of their reading responses in the texts of the books we read together (which I have referred to as "Commonplace Books"). Over the course of our readings and discussions, the teachers and pre-service teachers responded to the books in a variety of ways, from the personal to the critical/theoretical to the pedagogical. After thoroughly coding the transcripts of all our discussions and charting the responses they kept in their Commonplace Books, I organized their responses into three larger narratives that I believed spoke to the three research questions: Narratives of Vulnerability, Narratives of Conflict, and Narratives of Insight.

Summary of Findings

Consistent with Welch's (2000) findings on book clubs, teachers' discussions often began with highly personal stories and moved to the theoretical and pedagogical. As Welch also found, discussions began fairly informally with the participants making personal connections to the text,

and the level of personal sharing increased as the participants developed a rapport with and trust in one another. And as a narrative study in which I was a co-participant, my own stories also became entwined with those of the other participants, requiring me to engage with a similar kind of risk-taking that my participants took on, as I, too, made myself vulnerable to them. Indeed, the Narratives of Vulnerability that I generated from all our personal stories ranged from discussions of their experiences with body image, their family life, to stories of infant loss. I called these stories “Narratives of Vulnerability” in order to underscore the deeply personal nature of the stories and emphasize the level of trust and openness required for the participants to share them freely. While some of the participants used the texts to discuss their own experiences (Sumara, 1995, 2002), others engaged in more critical storytelling (Aveling, 2001), telling stories that reflected ways in which, in their own lives, they resisted some of the cultural imperatives apparent in the texts. Moreover, as our stories of personal connection became more conversational, with one participant sharing a story and others sharing similar accounts in response, we witnessed several moments of what Conle (1996) calls “resonance,” instances in which a story would be told and then re-told in light of a new text or another contribution from a fellow participant.

While the participants easily situated themselves into the texts, finding ways to connect with them personally, regardless of their personal feelings about them, finding uses for them in their classrooms, despite recommendations from Schick and Hurren, (2003); Kirby and Kirby (2010), and DeGracia (2012), proved more difficult. In fact, as I discussed in the second section of Chapter Four, I titled their responses Narratives of Conflict in order to reflect the tensions the participants felt regarding the potential uses of young adult memoirs. During the study, the participants cited reasons such as the controversial language in the texts and potentially

impressionable students whose negative life experiences might be magnified by events in the texts, as their reasons these particular texts might prove problematic in the classroom. However, some suggested using excerpts to demonstrate examples of autobiographical writing, or assigning or recommending the texts to individual students rather than students as a whole. Might other young adult memoirs (see the list in Appendix B) have been found by the participants to be more classroom-friendly, more pedagogically useful?

On the other hand, as I discussed in the final section of Chapter Four, which I called “Narratives of Insight,” the participants reported finding the experience of reading and re-reading texts valuable for themselves as readers, as only one participant reported having re-read the same book more than once prior to the study. Likewise, the participants demonstrated a willingness to log their responses in their Commonplace Texts despite having been instructed never to write in books. Though their written responses were not as detailed, lengthy, or as frequent as I had hoped, the Commonplace Books provided a space for the participants to respond to the books privately, just as the book discussions offered a space for social/public responses. As I discussed, some of the participants used this space to elaborate on, or reinforce, their book-group responses, while others used the space to make comments that they were otherwise unable to make during the group discussion. Thus, the Commonplace Books added a richer dimension to the narratives, as the participants negotiated both their private and public readings (Sumara 1995).

Implications

While at present, none of the participants have found ways to incorporate young adult memoirs into their classrooms, as I had hoped, there are nevertheless a number of important implications I can make from the study. Following this bullet-pointed list, I shall discuss each of these implications at length:

- Consistent with Welch's (2000) findings, book clubs generate spontaneous, varied responses, ranging from the personal to the pedagogical.
- Book clubs offer teachers the opportunity to engage in professional exchange as well as greater intrapersonal understandings.
- Book clubs offer a social dimension to reflective practice.
- Despite recommendations from Schick and Hurren, 2003; Kirby and Kirby, 2010; and DeGracia, 2012, incorporating young adult memoirs into existing curriculum may be difficult; the Common Core Curriculum State Standards Initiative may make it even harder.
- Re-reading books gives the participants greater insight into their own reading habits, enabling them to make more informed decisions about selecting a particular text for their particular classroom.
- Using a Commonplace Book-like method in the classroom is an efficient way for teachers to track their students, as well as their own, comprehension of and responses to texts, even as they change over time.

First, book club formats are compatible with reader-response frameworks, as each recognizes the validity of a variety of types of responses: personal responses, pedagogical responses, and critical responses (Welch 2000). Because of this, the participants were able to think about reading both as individuals, situating themselves personally in texts, as well as teachers potentially using these texts in their classrooms. As the participants sorted through the tensions between their personal and pedagogical responses, they were able to use their own responses to the texts as a springboard to gain insight into how such texts might affect students both pedagogically and personally, better enabling them to make curriculum decisions about the types of texts suitable for their particular students.

Secondly, using a book-club approach facilitated an opportunity for the participants to understand themselves better as both readers and teachers and to engage in interdisciplinary professional exchange. As such, the participants had a deeper understanding of how other

teachers seize opportunities for literacy enrichment in areas other than ELA (English Language Arts) classrooms.

In fact, book clubs are an efficient way to facilitate professional reflection among teachers, adding a social dimension to reflective practice. While the participants read and reflected on the texts privately, they were able to work through the tensions of their private responses in a social setting among other fellow teachers, considering how different teaching contexts might bring about different pedagogical scenarios if a particular text were selected to be a part of a curriculum. Having an interdisciplinary participant group, made of individuals of varying degrees of experience and education offered the participants added a richer dimension to the group's discussion, as the participants were able to bring their teaching experiences, or recent coursework, or both, to bear on the discussion as a whole.

While recommended by a growing number of educational researchers (Schick & Hurren, 2003; Kirby & Kirby 2010; and DeGracia, 2012), incorporating young adult memoirs in curricula presents a number of potential difficulties that teachers might consider. For example, because young adult memoirs often broach topics and use language that might be deemed controversial (prison experiences, drug use, casual sex, teen pregnancy, abortion) and often do not resolve these controversies, using them wholesale in classrooms with a wide audience may not always be possible. Teachers must consider whether their parent populations and particular administrations would be supportive of discussing such topics in the classroom. In addition, Common Core Curriculum standards might make it increasingly difficult for teachers to incorporate young adult texts of their own choosing into their curriculum, as they must now consider objective standards for sufficient complexity and lexile difficulty. In other words, the

lexile difficulty of some young adult memoirs may be deemed too low for the grade level for which the content is appropriate (http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf).

As one of the key parts of this study, participants were asked not only to read the texts but to re-read them, giving the participants the opportunity to attend not only to the literary characteristics of each text (plot, character development, setting, foreshadowing, tone-- all characteristics they might teach to their students), but also to attend to their own responses, considering why they respond the way they do. Indeed, one of my built-in assumptions as I designed this study is that re-reading books would give the participants some insight into their own reading habits. And in fact, not only were the participants able to deepen their understanding of the text on the second reading, but they were better able to notice their own tensions between responding to the texts personally and making appropriate curriculum selections for their particular classes, given individual, unique teaching contexts. Re-reading books is useful for teachers in terms of professional development, both for its potential to enrich personal and pedagogical responses to a text, and for teachers to better understand themselves as life-long readers seeking to pass along a love of reading to their students.

Unfortunately, given the participants' remarks in the study, re-reading texts is not a common practice for teachers, even those who say they love reading, nor is it an encouraged practice in teacher education programs, despite its benefits. To make matters worse, it is also not easy to require of students in a curriculum (such as the Common Core State Standards Initiative) focused on breadth and meeting particular milestones, though re-reading passages is certainly possible and should be encouraged. For students to reap the benefits of re-reading, time must be built into the curriculum—and into the school day-- for students to engage in the practice; merely

suggesting they do so will not suffice, and only avid readers are likely to re-read books on their own.

On the other hand, the participants were resourceful in finding ways to incorporate a Commonplace Book- like method in their own classrooms. While writing in texts is not possible with district-owned books, the participants suggested using post-it notes (that could be removed without damaging the text) in order to log responses over time. Therefore, a Commonplace Book-type method in the classroom may be an efficient way for teachers to track their own students' responses, gauge reading comprehension, and facilitate opportunities for students to think about their own responses to texts and how and why these responses may change over time.

Recommendations for Further Research

This dissertation has explored how young adult memoirs might be used in pedagogical contexts, both ELA and non-ELA classrooms. Using a book club approach with the five participants reading and re-reading three memoirs, I considered how the participants, pre-service or in-service teachers, might situate themselves personally in texts, as well as how they might respond to the experience of re-reading the texts and logging their responses in the margins of their texts. I hoped, in the meantime, that the participants might consider ways that these texts might be used in their classrooms. However, even despite the participants' current inability to find uses for these particular young adult memoirs in the classroom, I maintain my argument that they are potentially valuable in the classroom and make the following recommendations for further research.

First, to echo the study's limitations as discussed in Chapter Three, only five participants took part in this study, which is typical of a narrative study. Moreover, the participants came

from interdisciplinary teaching backgrounds with varying levels of experience and degrees. Therefore, to better understand how young adult memoirs might be used in classrooms, further research is needed, which would involve participants who teach only secondary education students as well as participants who teach primarily secondary ELA courses.

In addition, further research and time will be needed to understand how the Common Core Curriculum State Standards will be interpreted by both ELA and non-ELA teachers, and until then, the role of young adult memoirs, or young adult literature, in general, remains to be seen. As teachers learn to keep pace with a more accelerated curricula with more rigorous standards, young adult memoirs may be a valuable inclusion into curriculum that enable teachers to combine sophisticated content with a more accessible lexile level of difficulty.

Thirdly, future studies might involve different texts. While this particular study involved two texts that the participants deemed too controversial for classroom use, other young adult memoirs broach less controversial topics and may be better suited for general audiences. Moreover, this study did not engage graphic memoirs, but as Common Core Curriculum Standards Initiative recognizes that graphic texts offer an additional level of complexity to comprehension and interpretation, future studies might involve experimenting with texts that involve visual as well as textual components.

Finally, a future study might involve participants who are not current classroom teachers but instead work as administrators, school counselors, coaches, and para-professionals. What opportunities for professional enrichment might young adult memoirs offer? Perhaps by engaging with accessible texts that broach themes common to secondary education students, school officials, both inside and outside classrooms, might better understand themselves as readers, and by extension, better understand the students with whom they work.

To conclude, I would like to return to the scene in which I opened this chapter. As we sat in the familiar suite where we had held our book group meetings, this time informally chatting and catching up on the new school year, I was disappointed that none of the participants was using any young adult memoirs in his or her classrooms yet. However, as I listened to our chatter, I realized that what had started as a practical study intending to introduce an underused genre into the classroom had become something wholly different. All the participants discussed ways in which their own reading strategies had changed, improved, even been enriched by the process, and that was valuable. After all, it is understanding ourselves as learners that we become better teachers in the long run.

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APPENDIX A: PRE-STUDY PARTICIPANT SURVEY

1. What autobiographies and memoirs have you read (even if only in excerpt), particularly in school?
2. When you read an autobiography or memoir, how much truth do you expect it to include?
3. When you read a literary text, how many interpretations do you expect the text to have?
Who do you think is authorized to make correct interpretations?
4. When you read a memoir or work of fiction, do you find yourself comparing your own life to the life of the subject/character being portrayed? If so, how does this affect your response to the work?
5. If you were a teacher, would you consider reading Young Adult novels and memoirs with your students?

APPENDIX B: YOUNG ADULT MEMOIRS, A LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

- Album, M. (1997) *Tuesdays with Morrie*. New York: Random House.
- Alexander, S.(1997). *On my own: My journey continues*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
- Alexi, S. (2007). *The Absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. New York: Hachette Books.
- Angelou, M. (1969) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Appelt, K. (2004). *My father's summers: A daughter's memoir*. New York: Henry Holt Publishing.
- Bechdel, A. (2006). *Fun home: A family tragicomic*. Boston: First Mariner Books
- Carson, B. (1990). *Gifted hands: The Ben Carson story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing.
- Chace, R.(1993). *Chautauqua summer: Adventures of a late-twentieth century vaudevillian*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Cleary, B. (1996). *A girl from Yamhill: A memoir*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Conlon-McIvor, M. (2004). *FBI girl: How I learned to crack my father's code*. New York: Warner Books.
- Crow Dog, M. with Richard Erdoes (1990). *Lakota woman*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Crutcher, C. (2003). *King of the mild frontier: An ill-advised autobiography*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Frey, J. (2004) *A Million little pieces*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Gantos, J. (2002). *Hole in my life*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Ginsberg, B. (2009). *Episodes: My life as I see it*. New York: Roaring Book Press.
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- Hurston, Z. (1942). *Dust tracks on a road: An autobiography*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Ilibagiza, I. (with Steve Erwin).(2006). *Left to tell: Discovering god in amidst the Rwandan holocaust*. California: Hay House Inc.
- Jiang, J. (1997). *Red scarf girl: A memoir of the cultural revolution*. New York: Scholastic Books.
- Keller, H. (2002). *The Story of my life*. New York: Signet Classics.
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- Lorde, A. (1982). *Zami: A new spelling of my name: A biomythography*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.
- Lowry, L. (2000). *Looking back: A book of memories*. New York: Delacourt Publishing.
- Mah, A. (1999). *Chinese Cinderella: The true story of an unwanted daughter*. New York: Laurel Leaf Books.
- Majerus, R. (1998). *My life on a napkin: Pillow mints, playground dreams, and coaching the Running Utes*. New York: Hyperion Books.
- McCarthy. (1957). *Memories of a catholic girlhood*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Menchu, R. and Elizabeth Bergos-Debray (1984) *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian woman in Guatemala*. New York: Verso Publishing.
- Myers, W. (2001). *Bad boy: a memoir*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Nixon, J. (2003). *The making of a writer*. New York: Yearling Publishing.
- O'Brien, T. (1990). *The Things they carried*. New York: Penguin.
- Peck, R. (1995). *Anonymously yours*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers
- Peck, R. (2005). *Weeds in bloom: Autobiography of an ordinary man*. New York: Random House Publishing.

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Walker, R. (2001). *Black white and jewish: Autobiography of a shifting self*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Washington, B. (2000). *Up from slavery*. New York: Signet Classic.

Ye, T.X. (1997). *My name is number 4: A true story from the cultural revolution*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.

Zenatti, V. (2002). *When I was a soldier: A memoir*. Adriana Hunter, trans. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Zindel, P. (1991). *The Pigman & Me*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

APPENDIX C: FULL LIST OF CODE FAMILIES, CODES, AND EXAMPLE QUOTATIONS

Code Family: Teaching/Education Stories

- **Teaching background (How I got into teaching...)**

I'm a student teacher, and I guess I approached this- I'm a student teacher in middle school and high school level, and I didn't really approach this from teacher point of view, I haven't internalized teacher yet, uh, so I was more approaching this from a reading point of view, having not read like any biographies or autobiographies, I'm just seeing what's out there, kind of. (Lucy, meeting three, 3/20/13).

I've been teaching second grade for five years. However I expect when I go back in the classroom next year, I expect I'll go higher, like 5th or 6th, which means that, um, I'll be teaching more novels as opposed to picture books. So I thought this was a good opportunity for me to learn to tie the content, more cross-curricular, not with these particular books, but depends on the grade, but just how I could possibly do this. (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

Well, I uh, I went into teaching 'cause where I'm from there's two choices, you either go into nursing or you go into teaching. And I hate needles and I'm scared to death of hospitals and blood, so I went into teaching. And I was about to get married.... And I, I don't know, was head over heels, and I was gonna teach and have summers off and have babies and that's what I was going to do. And I went into teaching and I loved every minute of it, I loved my classes, loved my courses, I was offered a job at Mangham where I student taught, and I decided if I didn't go back and get my master's, I probably never would later on, so I went ahead and went back to get my master's. And I did it in curriculum and instruction; my focus was reading, and I, by that time I'd broken up with that guy and moved to Monroe and was getting my master's and was bored out of my mind. (Interview with Lauren, 5/24/13).

- **Kinds of books I usually teach/read in school:**

Just in comparison to the literature that I read now. **15:00** That was all far off. I mean I learned something from those characters, but um, yeah, I don't think I ever remember reading anything by, anyone remotely in my neck of the woods. (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Certainly nothing that seemed real. I think we read short stories. I think my, my when I was student teaching in middle school we read something about 7th grade. And it was like, this kid, and it's his first day of 7th grade, and he likes this chick, and he pretends to be French, and that was about it. And you could see the "whatever" faces on the students, they were like, why are we doing this? And then we made them do a plot chart and it, it had no meaning to them, I don't know, and, it was, they were in 8th grade, and it was supposed to be this piece of literature, well not *literature* (in French accent) but this piece of writing that they could relate to, and I don't think they related to it, well I don't know, maybe they did and didn't talk about it, but I think this would probably work- better- than what they already have. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

- **Teaching *Hole* in My Life**

I would use it more like to teach retrospection. Like predictions, foreshadowing, the English skills that some of them, that are lacking like so-called real-world experience, cause some of the students that I've taught, they have fathers and mothers who have gone to prison, who have gone for drugs, so they can relate to the story. They can pull those parallels out. Not necessarily 1971, 1972, but what this person did, what that person did. So if I don't have the classroom per se use, but like a counselor I can use it. Which is still technically teaching. I can teach them, well your parents did this, what do you think they should've done? Because I have a lot of children who are in foster care because their parents were in prison. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

Hole in My Life, when I was counseling I would've used that with some of my little people. Because, one of them he actually did, he's in Jetson now. He had what they call a violent temper. He just did and didn't believe there should be any consequences for his behavior. I just do it and nothing's gonna happen. Until people got tired of him hittin' and stealin' for no reason and pressed charges. And he see it as consequences. So I think something like that woulda really jolted him, like, no you're not doing drugs but you're doing something that can hurt other people, like stealing, and wind up in jail for that. That would've been good for my counseling group. (Taylor, Interview, 5/20/13)

- **Can't teach *Hole*.**

I feel like, um, thinking about it now, when I was in high school, I t would've been, it's too in the middle. For me individually, this probably would've been more than I needed, scare-wise. I would been like no, oh no. This has no relation to me. I was not attached to the drug culture, I was incredibly naïve in high school, but I went to [removed] down the street and it was a big drug and violence culture, but I think for our population it would've hit that spot in between. It's not dark enough or scary enough to be useful to many of the kids I talked to, or it's too much. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I had a couple of those. I had a couple with ankle bracelets who'd pull up their pants to show they're on house arrest. For them it's like a badge of pride. This, I don't think this book would impact them or anything because, I feel he left so much out. For them being 15, 14 in 1971 they'd be like "err, that's old." They'd need something more current. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

I was thinking more of, if this was a book that was assigned it couldn't go in the public school because someone's gonna get sued. Cause they were glorifying the life. And certain books they don't allow you to bring to those environments. But maybe a charter or private school you could bring it in. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

- **Use excerpts from *Hole***

Um, I don't teach big people. So I can't use this book in whole areas. I could probably pull paragraphs or pages from it and use it. I do like the journaling idea. And also, getting the kids to- I don't think you can get the kids to- I do a lot of teaching writing, and I don't think you can just go "write me a biography" That would be the same that Tom Gantos did- he couldn't. It took

him however long to.. you can't just get them to write it. But you can have them read something- this is common core, too- and write something based on what you've read, pull out the text-centric things so if they read an autobiography and they can make connections to that, so either pull out parts of this that you can use, or if you're not using this book, I don't use this book but I got ideas from this book, using autobiography on younger children's levels, getting ideas from that. What are you connecting with? How do you connect this to your life? Get them to write autobiographical at that age. That's how I think I could use it. (Hannah, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I was looking at Jack Gantos because I was going to look at his other books to use in my class, but the lexile level was way too high for my kids. So I didn't. But I looked at his other, his other fiction because I just loved the way he wrote. But I couldn't. But if I go up a year, if I have high-level kids, I'll use some of his for guided reading. So.. I enjoyed the story of *FBI Girl* better, but I enjoyed the writing of Jack Gantos better. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/15/13).

- **Wish I'd read *Hole* in high school.**

And as a high school student this would've been enthralling. I would've been completely immersed in this book. And, I would've been shocked a little bit. And I would've been I don't know, I would've questioned whether or not it was real or not, but I think that it's an autobiography would've made it a little bit scary. I don't think it's scary now, as a college student. I wanted it to be scarier. But I thought it was pretty scary, thinking about me reading this as a high school student. It's a lot more relatable time period than most of what I read in high school. I read either fantasy or tried to read classics. Because I wanted to be a lit major. And every character that I read I had to find a way to put them in my world. And HE's a lot closer to the world that I was in, in high school than most characters that I've read. (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

- **Using *Hole* to teach writing**

I think this would be cool to use like a creative writing style? Kind of the way we did writing in it, but also like, because of the way he writes in his own journal, we talked about narratives a little bit. Have the kids- give them some options of different biographies and have them to write their own stories in them, around them. I like this writing in books. I thought it was interesting and fun. Kind of giving new meaning to what I was writing- like keep a journal in a book- it might drive them a little crazy, but... (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I think I could use excerpts of *Hole in My Life* because I love the way he write, to use to teach writing, even to my fourth graders. And to show that he started writing when he was younger. And um... *FBI Girl*. Now, I wouldn't use *Wasted* because I didn't appreciate the way she wrote, I didn't appreciate the content, that just wasn't a book for me. That I would use. But the other two, I thought they were- the literacy I could show, using their work, would definitely help my students become better writers. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/15/13).

So what I'll do is I'll pull out, my plan to do this year is teach language within writing, and I'm gonna use the book we're reading in social studies to help with this, so I'll pull out excerpts and say look at this section and tell me about the grammar and tell me, how did they use- if we're looking at quotation marks, So they'll be looking at paragraphs they've already seen so they

won't have to concentrate on actually reading it that time; they'll be looking for something else. (Hannah, Interview, 5/15/13)

- **Can use *Wasted* for individual students**

I was the accidental teacher because I was actually a social worker. And this one would've been helpful when I was working with a certain set of teenage girls we had, they were recovering substance abusers. And they ran a group home on Lover's Lane, and this would've been helpful to two of them because one of them did have an eating disorder, and one was starting because they called her fat, and she was starting to have that body dysmorphic thing going, I don't know how it actually turned out for her because they found out she was pregnant before she left so we don't know the ___ for her. But it was really starting to be a problem for her because she was trying to figure out ways she eat and not gain weight. So this would've been a really good book for her to read. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Can't teach *Wasted*/ Not good for students.**

I didn't take that as dishonesty that she says it wasn't her parents. I took that as her realizing- she talks a lot about- how her parents messed her up, but, I feel like she feels there's something broken in her already. Even when she's born, as a baby, she has this weird relationship with food. And, I don't know? I just, I wouldn't give this to girls with eating disorders. Because to me, this is a testament that, you're broken, you were broken before, you're broken forever, sorry, you're broken. You can learn to deal with it, but you're broken. Deal with it. And I don't know, again. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I, I know like a huge chunk of it is her youth and...even she says it, she never was a kid, or whatever, from, like age five on, she was dressing up and wearing lipstick and going on stage. I would not- I definitely know some teenagers who relate to this? But in a large group, this would not go over well. Or people would just be very irritated. Because It's very wordy. And I think it's written at the level...I, I would not give this to my seniors at McKinley. I think it would go over their heads. And they would've been discouraged-Even if they could've read it, and I THINK some could, they would not have. It would've been too discouraging. Just the density. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

I think impressionable, like impressionable people...they should not read it. You know what I mean? I'd read it and think, "Oh man. Maybe I should lay off the pizza." [laughs] I know she's crazy, but.. I'm growing my thighs a little bit. Maybe I should just not eat that cookie. (Lauren, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

But I did read the book, and I do think it helped the way I see teen autobiographies, and I think they should be taught and selected. It didn't change my view that they should be taught, because I think they're very beneficial, but it did change my view about the way they're selected to be taught. And it's because, I've tried to consider after reading this book, how high school students read books, and what they take from books. Before you're taught to read a book in any other way, how you take in any material or form of art or expression, and it's through a reflection of yourself. You examine everything through yourself and your own personal experiences, and um, in that way, I think this book would be helpful for, um, teens to read as far as relating to how this

girl went through puberty. How this girl experienced her childhood. I mean, this book really is an examination of her life psychologically in a way that many people never examine their lives. (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13).

- **Teaching *FBI Girl***

I would use um, excerpts out of it, like um, I like language studies, like where you go back and look at the words. Like some of the words she used were like older words, to show how that word was used in that context and how it began and then how it's used in the present context. : It would have to be middle school age. Like 11-13. 'Cause I don't think the elementary students would really get it, and I don't think the high school students would be all that interested in it. (Taylor, Interview, 5/20/13).

- **Would use *FBI Girl* in classroom**

I loved this book! I'm, I don't want to mess up the research, but I almost texted you when I was done with this to say "thank you for ending on a good note." You know, cause this one I really enjoyed. I will actually USE this one. (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

- **Educational plans**

I want to be a reading specialist. Um, I don't know. I want to do that. I want to teach college. I want to work with beginning teachers and help them figure out what to do instead of just throwing them in there and letting them go. And I don't know. I really don't know what I want to be when I grow up. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24).

Yes. After undergrad it will be one of my only options. And I know I want to get a Master's degree. So, um, it just depends. I want to teach college someday for sure. And I feel like I'll be a phenomenal high school teacher. I feel like if I become a high school teacher I'll love it and never quit, or I'll hate it and quit after the first year. And I'm afraid of the first one happening. Because I don't want to do that for the rest of my life. And I feel like I would want to after the first year. I'd never leave because I'd fall in love with it and become passionate about it. (Chad, Interview, 5/17/13).

- **Change in teaching plans/ Teaching in new context**

I said there's been some changes, so you should come back. Oh. Ninth Ward. Junebug and Ninth Ward. And I'm doing a really fun book called the Adventures of a South Pole Pig.: A Novel of Snow and Courage. It's about a pig that wants to be a sled dog. And the reason I'm reading that one is so that, um, it talks about, it travels from where it is to Antarctica, and we're gonna use it for maps. We're gonna use it for tracking, and understanding climate, and I'm like look at- how good is that??!! (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

- **No longer planning to teach**

I'd say that my situation is quite different because I'm no longer planning to teach. So yes, I benefitted by reading three interesting books that I wouldn't have otherwise read. I mean I don't

usually read autobiographies because I like worlds so much, I find our world boring. So, I'm not excited by it if I know the world going in. So yes, I benefitted from reading new books and getting to come and talk about them and do book club. That was fun. But probably not in a teaching way. I had a hard time connecting to teaching in those discussions. It seemed like everyone else was in tune with how they would use this book in class, and I was like, wow, I really didn't think about that. So yeah, in between. And I really like the idea of writing in your books, which I do for school anyway, but never for my own thing. So yeah, it was definitely worthwhile. (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/13).

- **Difficulties with teaching profession**

And I love to do it! I love being with my kids. Our school was in a very rural community. Parents could just come in. So I mean I had one person I worked with, a dad came and got in her face in the morning, and I thought, the special ed teacher was right there and he got in front of her and pushed him off of her. I thought he was about to hit her. I've had mamas come in from lunch duty, not from my kids, I've only had that one come in, but from lunch duty I had a mama come get in my face. And I was like, I did not do that, you can ask the other lady who was on duty, and if you have a problem you can go to the principal, don't get in my face hollering. It's scary. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

Like where I was, you could not use outside books. To supplement, you know? You had to use that awful book. That reading text book. If you supplemented, you'd get in trouble. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13)

- **Love to teach**

I loved to teach. Our teachers would tell us in grad school that not all of us would make it. And I thought, not me! But I did! Not because I didn't love it, it's because of all the crap that went with it. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13)

- **Defining the Teen Book (YA text)**

A teen book is something....that mama doesn't go gripe to the school board about." (Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

I think young adult books are, I think there's some truth to the- what the parents run to the school board- but I think more importantly a young adult book is what speaks to a young adult. It's written specifically.... for this weird age range..... where you're kind of stuck in the middle of things. It doesn't have to be, young adults can read adult books, and I think that's fine, but if it's a young adult book, I think specifically young adult books need to be geared to speaking to young adults in this kind of liminal space. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

See my parents aren't, they aren't from here. They're from Kansas and Georgia. And they're scientists. So we always had the, Where do I Come From books. For as long as I can remember. My sister is 6 years older than me, and we had the, This is what sex is. We didn't talk about it, but there were books around. In case we wanted to know. So, so I don't know. So, I don't know. So I'm kinda reassessing that this is not a teen book. I mean, it's not a real teen book, but it definitely approaches those things that need to be approached for teens. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

- **Teaching controversies with YA books**

I think it depends on the location. Because I grew up in Plaquemine, and it's a real small town, so certain- this might not work in Plaquemine, but you might could do it in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. And it'll be just fine. But it was like- a teacher showed and the movie had g- it didn't have a curse word, the person said Hell in it, and she got wrote up 'cause she didn't watch it first. "They said, "Hell."" Hell is in the Bible. And they go to church, they've heard Hell, they've heard more than that. But something so simple... We're supposed to send G-rated movies if we want our children to watch it. They don't make G-movies that aren't cartoons... (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I don't know if this relates necessarily, but in my middle school placement, some of my fellow student teachers did a novel unit in 8th grade where students got to pick the novel they would like to read, so they split up into different classes, and these two student teachers did their own book, with the help of their mentor teachers, but they were the primary teachers, and their book was about rape. And this was about rape. And it was a kinda hot-button thing, all they did was send permission slips home to the parents and that was it, and if the kids didn't get the permission slips signed they weren't allowed to read a book, but other than that, they didn't have a problem after that. And the administration let them do whatever, and these were people who were not even first-year teachers. I don't know how well it went over to them, I haven't gotten to talk to them about it, but I don't know, it was kinda surreal. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Well you know that's funny, because in the book (Wasted) she talks about having those feelings. You know? And she doesn't really know, you know. So she starts controlling- the eating was something she could control. She starts controlling those feelings. But we don't give them literature that says hey, it's okay. Down here we don't. My mamma and daddy would've been like no, you're not reading that. You're gonna go to hell." (Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

"You just let the parents know there's certain content in there. 'Cause one lady did a unit on slavery in Lukeville, and some parents were upset, but more parents weren't upset and . . .

(Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

- **Teaching other YA books**

We've done C.J. Walker and the little autobiographies that you do on the little readers, so um, but memoir, no, not yet. I taught second graders- and the curriculum was different. The curriculum I was using, I didn't find as much flexibility to do the type of thing I'm doing now, which is the reason I made a switch. (Hannah, Interview, 5/15/13).

Code Family: Personal Connection/Narratives

- **Personal story related to Wasted**

Well, I spoke with this good friend of mine in Houston. She's this beautiful black girl who could be a supermodel if she wanted to. And we've been friends probably since the 11th grade. And she told me about a year ago that she struggled with bulimia in high school. And I *never* would've known it. And it was, I never knew anyone that suffered from bulimia, and it was shocking for me. But when I read this, I remembered that- And then half-way through this book I contacted her, and I told her I was reading this book and when she'd told me I had no clue what bulimia was. I knew what it was but like most people. And I told her I'd been reading this book and I connected in a much deeper way what she was going through. And she said, "Are you reading Wasted"? (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13)

The thing I love most about this book are the first few chapters. It's before she even gets to high school. IT's because I have a really close friend who, um, isn't, she doesn't have an eating disorder, she hasn't been diagnosed with an eating disorder, but she has been diagnosed with clinical depression for the past three years. She's overweight and she, I remember, she was overweight, deemed overweight in the 4th or 5th grade, and she went to the Pennington Institute, and did some tests and did some healthy eating things and in middle school lost some weigh, and then when she went to high school she started gaining more weight, and she was diagnosed with depression and since then she's put on quite a few pounds, and it's the source of her depression. It's obviously the source of her depression; it's all about her weight and how she looks, all the time. There's nothing else that makes her unhappy. I know this; I spend quite a lot of time with her, and everything that she goes through mentally is that of someone with an eating disorder. Everything she goes through mentally is that of my friend Caitlyn. It's strange because she doesn't have the lack of eating, but she has disordered mentality. She can't get out of bed in the morning because she doesn't want to try, she doesn't want to see how she looks wearing the clothes in her closet...(Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17).

- **Personal story about weight.**

When I first started reading it she was talking about the age of nine, I was like, what was I doing at the age of nine where I thought something was wrong with my body? So it's like, trying to think back in my childhood of things that might have came close to hers, and all I can remember about being nine was I had insecurities about my body because I got breasts early, and I had pubic hair early, and a year later I got my menstrual cycle, so I remember having, like, the technical body of an adult, of going to an adult woman at nine, and not being viewed as a child anymore? SO I could relate on that level, but by the time I got to middle school I was like really really skinny, so I was trying to eat up everything to be bigger, 'cause I think I wanted my butt big, so I figured I'd gain a little weight. In high school I was a size six, but by college I'd gained that freshman 15, but then I went through a really bad breakup and went into starvation mode where I was eating out of a little bitty saucer like that (holds up circle the circumference of pointer finger and thumb connecting), and I would have like a little tablespoon of everything, so I can see how you can just slip into the anorexia part, but I never did like the throwing up, so I didn't get the bulimia, and it wasn't until I had my oldest son that I became comfortable, and as

you can see my comfort has stayed, but I'm comfortable in my body now." (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I remember staring at those girls, even in 3rd and 4th grade, at school I always had my cheap Lee jeans on or my Chic jeans on that my mom got at Sears, and there were those girls, those glamorous girls, those girls who just came out of the womb graceful, she talks about them too, and I totally connected with that. And I would stare at them and wish that my body looked like that, and maybe if I bought the right jeans they would, my body would. Maybe if wasn't me, maybe it was the jeans, so I would beg my mom for designer jeans, and that didn't work either. Because my butt would just... That was before J. Lo and Kim Kardashian made it acceptable to have a butt. (Heather JD, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I think it's funny you talk about, you know, your mom and the food and internalizing it, and I think part of the reason I can relate to it is I, I have a weird relationship with food in the opposite direction, the overeating, this kind of new American obesity standards. But I, I very firmly remember my father and stepmom being very concerned about my weight. And I think I was older, so I don't know how much that has to do with it, but in early middle school, like in sixth grade, you're overweight, you're too fat, you're not supposed to be this way as a child, you need to lose weight, you need to exercise more, oh no you can't eat that, and I went the opposite direction with it, I was like, "Fuck you I'm gonna do what I want. I'm going to eat because you tell me I cannot eat. "And I was never a rebellious child, or overly rebellious, I guess, but I don't know, I wonder how much that has to do with age or where that was coming from. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I mean, I talked to you about me starving to death, but I never threw up or anything. I can see my cousin Natalie and the way that she just abused her body, and would sleep with anybody, I can see that. I can identify with that and say Oh My God. But not the self-destructive part. I can't understand that. (Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

I was better when I was in karate. When I was in karate, I would have to eat or I would pass out. When I stopped doing karate, my dad said, "You're getting a little big. You're gaining weight. You'd better watch out. (Lauren, Personal Interview, (5/24/13).

I was always skinny. I always had hips, but I didn't have the big behind, and they were like, you're a black girl, you're supposed to have a big booty. where's your booty? And I was like, where's that written? Please show me where that's written because I've seen lots of girls who are not black have big booties. They were like, your butt is flat. Ok. aNd the world is going to end because? But it took a long time to get to that point. I was trying to figure out ways I could make it bigger. And then it was like, huh, I don't care anymore. . . . Cause and a long time they had me hating my hair, they said "You have nappy hair." You can see my hair's not straight, you can see it at the roots, but I'm like, I'm black, and my hair's not supposed to be straight. But for a long time I was getting lots of perms 'cause I thought my hair was supposed to be straight and just lay down. (Taylor, Personal Interview, 5/20/13).

- **Family story about weight.**

My sister, she's not a skinny person, she just don't buy food. She says, "I gotta cut something from my budget so I cut that." And she eats what people give her from their house. I'm like, why you don't buy food? . . . And she says, I can't lose weight. And that's because she eating random food that people give her. And some of that food is laden with fat! And some is not. Like, I love lard like the old people. Cause I deep fry in animal food. Cause it give food a pretty coat- So, she really shouldn't be in my house eating. (Taylor, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

That's how my family cooks. Not the fried food, but my mom bakes. Constantly, pretty much. My family cooks. We don't cook Southern, particularly, but We're a family of food! And that was never necessarily a bad thing. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

I couldn't connect with the self-abusive behavior, but I see it in my cousin. And she's the one who's actually going through a divorce right now. And she told me the other day when we went to go watch her brother graduate from high school. And I was like, you know, Are you okay? What happened? And she said, You know, it's really hard on me right now. I've lost like 5 pounds in a week. I've only been drinking Ensures all week because it's hard for me to get anything in." And looking at her, I thought, my God. I need to start starving again. Look at Natalie. She's losing weight and I've put on a couple pounds. Like, I've put on about 10 pounds this semester and it's like Hmmm.... You know. . So yesterday I only ate like a handful of cereal and I think that was it. and I had some water. And I was laying there in the bed and I thought, you know what? This is so stupid. I'm ridiculous. But I feel like I can't lose weight unless I starve. And I go home and I don't know. Anyway .. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

- **Personal story about pregnancy.**

And then when I got pregnant with my older son, my doctor begged me, cause instead of gaining weight I was losing. He was like, "Are you dieting?" And I was like, no, I have morning sickness really bad, and it was just nine months of that stuff all day, but wanted to send me to a psychairtrist because he thought I had an eating disorder and was dieting. Cause I didn't gain weight, I lost 30 pounds. And mom had to tell him I had morning sickness all day before he would believe I wasn't starving myself. And I had a seven pound baby so I wasn't starving, he got what he needed, I was just, not looking right. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

We eat 3-6 meals a day. I remember being pregnant, doc said, "You need to gain weight. You need to eat six meals a day." And I was like, "Really? Six?" So I'd eat breakfast then a snack, then lunch and a snack, then supper and a snack after supper. That was the most eating I ever did. I thought Lord, after I have this baby I'm never eating again. (Taylor, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

- **Personal story related to FBI Girl**

I would say around 35 'cause that's when they start looking for it. And a lot of women back then got married young cause my mother was 15 when she got married in the 60's. So she may have been a young bride and may have been relatively young when she had that second child. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

Yeah, she never had that opportunity. My oldest sister was jealous of those that came behind her. And I was third, I had two in front and two behind me, so I didn't care anymore 'cause I was in the middle. And my little sister was jealous 'cause we got to do more things. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

You know my cousin was a twin, and his brother died during birth, the umbilical cord got wrapped around, and they took the baby and my aunt never saw him. My other aunt named him, they buried him, and my aunt never got to go the funeral or anything. He's my age. (Lauren, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

I liked this book. I just paralleled it with my daddy being a police officer for like 25 years, working 11-7. For a while I did try to pick out what the police-speak was, I'd hear the word "resident" and I was like "what's that mean?" I didn't know that word, but it mean, I'm home, SO it's like, I spent time with him, but we didn't really bond till I got older. Cause it's like, You're a girl child, go do girl things... : I turned 18 and started college, and we played cards, and it was like, "Let's go to Bingo!" and then I was 21 and we could go to the boat, but all the way up that point, you're a girl child. Go play with girls. Go follow your mama, see what your mama can do with you. My favorite: you don't need to work; tell Daddy what you want." I miss that. . . Yeah, cause you look for that, my daddy only had one son and three daughters, and my sister didn't come till I was 11. I was like, my sister don't like me, my brother's a boy, they don't want to play with me. Let me go find my daddy. He didn't play with girls, he was like, "Go play with these dolls." He didn't know he could actually nurture and engage with his daughter. We played tackle football in the yard with the boys and he was like, "Nope! Get in the house! Girls don't do that! .. Even in the 70's in my house, he was like, you're a girl. Just concentrate on getting married. I'm like, getting married?? You want to go to college for real? I'm like, yeah. So it's like, ok. He wanted to, my dad actually wanted to drive me to college and drop me off and center his life around me and come get me. 'Cause I might get a boyfriend while I was at school. HE was a police man and was always scaring them off anyway. He'd come in with his full uniform on and his gun on his side and his shotgun in his hand; HE called his shotgun Charlie Brown. My grandfather's name. And he'd sit in between us. Anything you want to do to my daughter you have to do with me first. Now what boy wants to hear that? (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

When I was in school they didn't differentiate. You were mild, moderate, profound. You were mentally retarded; it might be Down's, Asperger's, Autism, Like I was telling my children, You also didn't see those children when I was in school. They had their own separate little wing. They ate lunch and stuff with each other; you just didn't see them. You didn't see them on the bus, they rode their own bus. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

But even in high school and middle school, in my middle school and high school, those kids were still separated out. You either didn't know, I'm sure, a couple of my friends had forms of high-functioning autism. That was really common among gifted children to have weird social skills....(laughs) But they were either totally mixed in and you didn't know, or they were totally separated. Like I couldn't even tell you where the classroom was when I was in high school, where the kids with severe Down's or severe autistic tendencies were. You knew they were around, you saw them every now and again, but they were definitely somewhere else. We didn't talk about it. (Lucy, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

Code Family: Comment/Reaction to Book

- **Summary of book (Wasted)**

I didn't feel it was just about her mom, I thought the whole yo-yoing from bulimia to anorexia was just an impressively unintentional display of her parents. Her mom who wouldn't eat anything, and was kind of crazy ice lady, and her dad who would just take in everything and give back nothing, so she would go back and forth...she wanted desperately to be her mother but she was so much like her father, and then all the arguments when she was a little bit younger about..."Oh, you're so much like your mother, you're so much like your father," kind of yo-yoing. That it wasn't just mom. There was so much dad that she didn't talk about as much. I don't know. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Negative reaction to Wasted:**

I didn't think this was the best written thing I've ever read? For her to have won all these awards and everything else when she was in high school, and to have gotten a writing scholarship to college, you know, I didn't see that from this book. And, um, I thought that she generalized things. Because she said, you know, people say eating disorders is not a control issue. How does she know that? It's not a control issue for her, but how does she know it's not a control issue for other people? I thought she over-generalized, you know,- she was taking her personal experience and making it everybody's. she was took hers and the people she was in the facilities with and made it, um...she's just a train wreck. I mean, I felt bad for her, but I really didn't want to keep reading, I mean, it was, like it was painful for me to finish the book." (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

Uggg... she says she didn't write it for that. Did she write it to help people? But if she did, they're not gonna- You know, (looks at Heather JD) You say it's a cult classic, and maybe it is with people with eating disorders, and I didn't have one, and I understand that, so I didn't get it. I wouldn't use this book, I thought it was not well written and painful. And not because um, like, I under- of the- these are very serious topics and I think they should be discussed, but it was the way she overgeneralized them I thought. (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I griped about it, I griped to Derek, my boyfriend, I was griping it's just making me sick to read it. Because I can just see, see the throw up? And it made me sick. Because she's so self-destructive. And he said you can't be that way about it because some people's brains are just wired differently. And she's just a different person. You can't judge her for that- And I'm like, I know that, but still. I can't read about it. (Lauren, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

- **Positive reaction to Wasted**

I thought she was challenging some of the generalizations in her that was in her charts by some of the doctors, like control issues, that she wants control, like usually when you think of an eating disorder, in the psychiatric community, it's because they're allegedly trying to gain control, so I think she was kinda like speaking against, it wasn't control issues for me, and the psychiaritrist, was supposed to say it was the marital issues of her parents.

She needed an editor. But I don't know. I'm torn. It's painful, but I'm desperately waiting for her to just be a year older, can we move on to the next step of this, but the same time token, it was very interesting, this kind of deep insideness. And, some of this was...I've never had an eating disorder. I've never had that kind of experience, um, but, it's such a pointed memoir, such a pointed story of her life. It's all about the food and the eating disorder. She talks about three boys () maybe. She talks- it's all about the food and the eating disorder. She doesn't, there's no other reflection on the rest of her life. In *Hole in My Life*, it was very pointed, but it was more like a chunk of his life, like, here is my life, I did all these things, but here are a few other things that happened in my life. In this one, I don't know, I kind of took the long-windedness about food and this disorder and herself as it being kind of a focused...biography. And that kind of weirdness of a focused biography. And I don't know how much of that is the nature of an eating disorder, and how much of that she was doing while she was writing. But did that make any sense? (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

Well, I think... I hadn't thought about that. Her being able to see her body in a different light. If she could. That could be very valuable. Cause she talks- right before her first hospitalization, she talks about disappearing. And maybe the magic of seeing and not seeing or the act of her body being able to create something else would've been good. But I'm not convinced that the self that she presents in this book would've seen it that way, would've been capable of it. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13)

I thought it was really interesting. I thought it was funny, and there were other reactions in the group, but like I said a couple times in the meetings, I think people's brains are really interesting. People who label themselves, or the world labels as "broken" or messed up in some way, I think it's cool to see- at least what they want you to see. I wouldn't say that's really what's going on in there, but it's what they want you to think is. (Lucy, Interview, 5/16/13).

- **Positive reaction to *Hole in My Life***

In regards to his writing, he was so lost, he was like, the good will rise to the top, and it just didn't work, plus, even if you have some kind of direction, then clearly these wonderful ideas will happen. Like when he wanted to write about Hemmingway's sea turtle. (Lucy, Meeting Two, 2/20/13)

What I like that he did was he kept stressing the importance of education, and not in your face. Like if I wanna be a writer, I'm gonna have to go to school and learn. If I want to be an electrician, I have to go to school. I appreciated that part of it, that he said he knew he'd have to do something beyond high school to do what he wanted to do. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13). Which is why it's actually useful! Cause like, I love, I love the part about the sea turtle! The sea turtle that ended up in Hemingway's pool? Like, what is that even? But, just like, that excitement! Oh my god, it's something different, it's something meaningful. And then five minutes in like Oh My God, this is terrible! What am I even doing? But that kind of, manic-depressiveness that I associate with being a teenager and being passionate about something maybe and not being really good about it. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

- **Negative Reaction to Hole in My Life:**

Cause like, I'm sure men get raped in prison all the time, why is he the exception to the rule? To where it was like, oh it happened to my friend not me. And the guy had told him there was a tax on it. So like, pretty much like you gonna pay your taxes. So I can't imagine that he didn't get approached more vigorously. So I don't know how much he's leaving out to make it seem more than what it is. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

- **Positive Reaction to FBI Girl**

I really, my favorite part was the mom. I loved the growth of the mom. Throughout the whole thing. I loved her assertiveness especially at the end. Like she really stepped up. (Lauren, Meeting Six, 5/15/13)

And the other thing that got me, I'm just trying to skim through this, when Hoover didn't send the letter about Joey. All the letters were on the- that got me more than them saying retarded or stupid. I'm like, they didn't even acknowledge that a baby was born! You know, Wow. The gov- I mean, wow! (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

Um, well it wasn't my favorite. I got so hung up at the very beginning. The way it's written I just love, like the writing style and the imagery. Especially early on when she's being a child, it's so excellent, these strange, weird connections. The smell- (Lucy, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

But I liked it best of all of them. And, I um, ...I started out with no background knowledge on it, so when I started it, I thought, FBI Girl, Oh, it's about a girl who's gonna...I knew it had something to do with her Daddy. So I was like, oh, her Daddy's gonna be in the FBI and she's gonna want to grow up to be like him, and she's gonna be in the FBI. And so I kept waiting for her to grow up and be in the FBI. And having some knowledge about it. And so, but after I went back and thought about the story, I liked it, even though it wasn't what I expected of it. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

I loved how they all supported her brother that had the disability. And ,I mean I love that. And I loved watching the growth of the mama. How she went from this, you know, housewife to become assertive. And she's like, Hey, we're gonna do this. And he's like, he didn't want to, but, he was like oh, ok. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

Another thing I thought was interesting, I don't know if anyone else brought it up was, I'm just gonna use her language-When she said Joey acts more "retarded" when he's around other "retarded" kids, and less when he's around regular kids in a regular classroom. (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

- **Question about book**

And let me ask this question and play Devil's Advocate just a little bit. He was always a happy baby and she was always loving on him, hugging on him. And I'm sure she loved him a lot. But she really wanted her dad's attention, and Joey got all her dad's attention. Wouldn't you, like, at that age, wouldn't you be a little jealous of your brother? You know, never once did she, and maybe she's a better person than I am. But you see what I'm saying? I, I would, would be, a little bit like, at least dad paid a little more attention to me than Joey. She never mentioned anything like that. (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

- **Question/confusion about plot event.**

What I found troubling was when he managed to get away, he went back to the room that he shared with the guy, and everything was there, except the ship's log? He didn't know something was funny, that that was missing? (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

- **Author background/motivations about book**

I would like to talk to her about what she thinks about this book now that she's 39. And have her maybe do a re-read and reflect. Do you mean what you wrote. Do you even know what you wrote? (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13)

Thinking about it now, um she's famous, she's written a bunch of books, she's made a bunch of money, and she's the first to tell you she's still struggling with this, but to me that's a bunch of do what I say, not as I do. It's clearly worked out for her... She almost died! But she said herself that, as a child all the time, when she was younger, when she was in middle school, she thought she might be dying and that was okay, so I think if a person who is in the same situation that it's easy to misread what an author is trying to tell you, especially when they say it in 100 words when they could've said it in 10. It was interesting to read this from the outside, but I don't know, if I was in her position, if I would've gotten the things that I got from it, at all." (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Quote from book**

Oh, here's one: [quotes book] "Starving is a feminine thing to do these days, the way swooning was in Victorian times, and she goes on to talk about the different things that women had to do for different generations. And not so much the way she wrote it, but that there are different things that define us as a woman and that she can pick out what defines her as a woman while it's happening, because I couldn't tell you what defines women in our day and age, I couldn't tell you. I don't think it's starving. She's a strange bird. (Lucy, Meeting Three 3/20/13).

She may have had bipolar moments when she was writing this. Because at some points she sounds really angry. And other parts she really docile. "I pushed my food and then I pull..." (imitating young girl's voice). (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Reaction to language used in book**

I thought the language worked. I mean it was, um, I don't know, uncomfortable sometimes, but not too much. It felt like I was in her brain, but I like that- being in people's brain. It ..was a little irritating and a little long-winded, but it felt true to being in her head. Same with the cursing. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

The only issue I'd have about using this in the classroom, I'm thinking about my last classroom and all of my inclusion kids that I have, and they talk about Joey drooling all the time and everything like that, and they look over at the little girl I have who was drooling. You know what I'm saying? I think that's a big issue I would have. I would not want them to use that word for another child in my class. (Lauren, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

Well in linguistics it goes back, pretty much to the 18th century, late 18th century, early 19th century, when they use the word imbecile? Like if you were mentally disabled they use the word imbecile a lot. It was just a language study where you trace the word all the way back to its use. To how it came to mean certain things at a time. That's what I did for my dissertation I trace certain words back to its roots and look at the original pronunciation, and then to see how the meanings change. . . Mine were pretty good about it, but I always removed labels, I never wanted to hear you're your exceptionality was. They were like "Troy's eating grass," and I'd say "Troy's just different and he likes grass. Tammie's gonna buy him some grass, and y'all go worry about what y'all want to eat. He had pica and he would eat pretty much anything. So that was the child to watch, but the kids learned to baby him, and they'd say, "No Troy, don't eat that." And they would take stuff from him, but you had to kinda like train them. Though those are the words people use, we don't use them here because sometimes words hurt people feelings. (Taylor, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

But I think if you, you're careful, using this book, it could help with that. Cause I went back to visit my middle schoolers to day, and they were using "retarded" left and right. And you fuss at them and they don't understand, but in lots of ways you see the reactions, the different reactions people had to Joey. And it hurt when people were so overt, like "oH my god, I'm so sorry." How that confused her especially when she was younger, less when she was older. If you talk about it, and they used queer a couple times, get kids aware of how hurtful these words are. Because I don't think they realize. My middle schoolers are good kids; I don't think they want to hurt each other's feelings except by poking at each other. But they're good kids and I don't think they really know what that word means. Or maybe they do, and I'm being too nice. (Lucy, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

An honest discussion about the word and bring in real examples like you did. I think that's a great thing. They have to understand how it relates to them, so relate it to them. And you know, depending on the classroom dynamic , so I'm not sure I would've used it in [Lauren's] classroom last year. So you just have to- (Hannah, Meeting Six, 5/15/13).

Code Family: Writing in Books

- **Difficulty writing in books**

It's very hard for me to write in a book. And so, and then I second guessed what if what I wrote was stupid, what if I shouldn't have highlighted that? I mean, come on..none of us have that ... you know, then I'm like, this is just a thought for me. So then I like, I wouldn't write for like 10 pages or 15 pages, and I'm like, I'm not writing!! And then I'll be like, oh no, I'm supposed to be writing, or then I just highlight everything, cause I like to give good quotes...I underlined a lot of quotes but I didn't really explain them. Maybe in the second reading I'll say what I mean by it, but. Since I just underlined what I liked and I didn't say why I liked it, it didn't take , it really didn't take long, after I got over..using a pencil in the books. Oh we weren't going for pen! We weren't going for pen! Maybe second time around..(Hannah, Meeting Two, 2/20/13).

Really, I wrote barely, not much in the end. Not much in the beginning, not like the other one. And I didn't find any "oh my gosh, she said that really well." I didn't find any of those. Like. Just blah... [laughs] (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Writing in books for first time**

That was the first time I ever wrote. . . after that, I wrote in a book for the first time and I was just like you, I was like, this is wrong, everything about it is wrong... (tape blip) little rebel, I was like..(group laughs) write it in! (Chad, Meeting Two, 2/20/13).

I had to be trained to write in books. Coming out of high school you can't write in a book without having to pay them money, but in my first year of college one of my professors said, "I don't want to see any pencils and paper; I want to see your pen hit this book" I was like pen? In my book? I paid for this book? So I had to learn to write in my books. But now, the books in my house, you can tell the ones I've really, really read, because they have writing all over them, even the binding. Cause I ran out of room. But I had to learn to write in the books it was okay, it wasn't going to kill the pages if I wrote in it. (Taylor, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Writing in books slows reading**

The showing up wasn't bad, but writing in the books- if you look, I either get lost in the story or I lose track of time, and forget to respond at the end. I have few notes because I was rushing to finish. (Lucy, Interview, 5/16/15).

- **Writing in books enhances reading**

I wrote a lot. It- it was just so interesting. She's so weird and so...like especially in the beginning there was so much I could relate to, even having never, just like a strangeness in relationships with any, with food. Strange, it's slow going, whether annotating or not. But I did, I did find some stuff that I thought was poignant at least, maybe not in the way she wrote it, but just in the ideas, like oh... (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

- **Writing in Books the Second Reading:**

My writing is always incoherent... I have bullet points and I have dashes.... "Prison removed his physical freedom but freed him mentally. This allowed his mental age to catch up with his physical age " because in prison he was free, he had a number not a name. I thought it like was a wake-up call because they didn't say Jack, they said, "Count." And I guess his number would change every time he did a count, but he still had to count, so there was always a number not a name. And remember his social worker person calling him by name. Once he - the so-called socialized things, he was able to redeem himself. That's what I put in it. (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Like, I think I, wrote..then halfway through. I mean, I enjoyed the book the first time around, honestly. But then knowing-I don't know, she's so, there's no light at the end of the tunnel. I mean you know this is gonna suck the whole way. (Lucy, Meeting Five, 4/25/13).

Going back through the second time I was really frustrated. Like, I didn't respond to this book with a lot of writing honestly. I underlined things that I liked, I left little notes. But there wasn't, I didn't connect very well. Reading through the second time, when his dad's all like, "Oh man, that girl had a baby when she was nine," Dad is a lying piece of shit. What is wrong with Dad? Why is he doing this? He is making that crap up. There is no way he, and why is he teaching his child to stereotype so strongly, like to the point where nothing else is important. I didn't like Dad the second time through. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

- **Students writing in books:**

I feel it would be hard for a good reader to do this. Like, a good reader to write as they go. Mostly cause I feel like it hurts them, like they wanna go head and just read it, and this slows them down and they would not want to read. I feel like it would be a chore to write and read, like- you know what I'm saying? (Lauren, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

But I do, I do require, even my 2nd graders, I have them pull out three, when we, when we read a chapter, I make them pull out three things they liked in that chapter. So they don't have to write it, but they do have to pull it. It helps them. I did one week with we did one book I tried it with, and one week without. And they said they actually liked it, it helps them remember things we could talk about things they really liked. (Hannah, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

I have middle schoolers right now and I don't know, I don't know if you could, you'd have to train them to do it. Like I don't know if they would do it, I don't know even if you forced them to write in a book or a journal if they would do it without sabotaging themselves. (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

Maybe for older kids it would be useful to them cause they're willing to think about how they think, but these middle schoolers- they do not like to think how they think at all, they don't like metacognition at all, when I ask them why they think about something, why they gave such an answer.... (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

So what I'm going to let them do is use sticky notes? So anytime they want- and I ordered sticky notes, so I have a plethora of sticky notes, which is what I do in my books, because until this process, like now I've actually written in a text book, I'm like "ooohh..." I finally like broke the, yeah. So thank you. (Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/15/13).

Reading Habits and Preferences

- **Reading YA fiction**

I tend to pick realistic fiction books that are really different from my own experience. Um, I don't know, maybe it's the performance studies, maybe it's the way my parents raised me, but I empathize with people easily. I get into their brains a lot, maybe more than I should. I don't know, I cry in movies, I get attached to people really people really quickly. So I want something different. I want to be in someone else's shoes, I want them to be really different. If I go through the work of reading a book, I don't know if that's the right sentiment." (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/13).

- **Grad school changes reading habits.**

I've seen that before, and I did not have that program, and I have a lot of friends in the English department who couldn't read anything for pleasure after learning a lot of literary theory and how to analyze books. I'm pretty good at turning my brain off if I need to. I can disengage when I need to. Um, I would say being an undergrad in straight English made it more difficult to read books for pleasure than being in graduate school for education. Maybe it was just my program. We didn't focus much on literary theory or English in the Holmes program, it was, "let's get all this education information into you." So it was easier to distance myself from analyzing literature because, we were so busy with pedagogy stuff in our brains. Like, this is how English teaching should go, or this was classroom management. (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/13)

- **How I read an autobiography**

I don't, I don't know if this is just the way I read books or it's my own personality, but I have a tendency to trust the narrator, pretty much implicitly, especially with an autobiography, especially when she's this crass. So like I never, pretty much, she never, she never talks about why she did stuff, I just took it as that, she never necessarily said about she did this to get her parents' attention, er, I don't know, she kinda talks around it sometimes, but. . . . (Lucy, Meeting Three, 3/20/13).

Even talking to someone as honestly as you feel you can be, you're always putting something out there. You can't, you never just "be yourself" because that's impossible. As far as I'm concerned. (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/13).

I am a reader, and I do know as a grade school and middle school student, I read books and directly applied them to my life, tried to gain something from them. I was always trying to find out how can I change myself to be this character I want to be? And, um, I don't think Marya is

someone I want anyone to be.(nervous laughter). I love the way she wrote this book, but I don't think she wrote this for high school students. I don't, I felt, in the second chapter, I think she wrote this for someone like me or someone older than me. And um, so, I'm not sure how high school students would take it, but as a piece of literature, I think, as a teen autobiography...has many beneficial aspects to it, teaching it in high school. I guess that's my overview of it. I mean, side note, I want you to know, I had a revelation in the second chapter, that I was taking notes as a writer, my nit-picky notes appear around the second chapter, and I was like, I'm going so much faster without taking notes in the book. (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13)

I think autobiographies would be beneficial especially to younger people. Fiction is beautiful way of expressing the struggle of life, it really is, , but at the end of the day, it's still fiction. This is the reality. This is reality on paper. (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13)

- **Love to read**

I make friends with the characters immediately. And if I don't make friends with the characters, that's the first signal, when I'm reading a book for fun, that oh wait, maybe this book isn't so awesome. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I like books a lot. I like reading and I tend to not branch out from my own world of books, so that was one hand, and um, I was in the throes of trying to figure out my own project, and I know how [interruption] so yeah, I was trying to figure out my own project, and I know what a pain in the butt it is when people don't want to participate, and this wasn't a hardship, and so Dr. Bach sent out the email and I thought, this should be fun. (Lucy, Personal Interview, 5/16/15)

A lot of romance novels. [laughs]. When it's my choice. Right now I'm reading a lot of qualitative research books. So... (Lauren, Personal Interview, 5/24/13).

Now reading is something I've always been a little scared of. Um, that's why I'm struggling to choose between creative writing which is very, very appealing, and I get to write a screenplay as my capstone piece. But a literature degree which is scary because I don't, I'm not familiar with the amount of work it would take for the literature classes, and b, I k now how much literature I'd have to read, andI don't like to tell people this, because it brings my credit as a person, as an intelligent human being down a little bit, but I've only read about 15 books in my life. And, from cover to cover that count as books. That aren't like middle school books. That are higher level than middle school books. Or maybe some of them are. All I know is I was given books, I was encouraged to read, and it was always so much harder for me. I don't know how someone sat down and can look down at a page of words without getting distracted. I wasn't diagnosed with ADD until the 10th grade, and talking to my doctor about it, he said that's one thing that people with ADD struggle with is reading a novel. It's still not the easiest thing for me to read for long periods of time. But literature scares me. But I know that the only way I'll become a better write is to examine the other works of people and their styles of writing. (Chad, Personal Interview, 5/17/13).

- **Re-reading habits**

Like I'll read for quotes, I'll be like, "Oh I need to remember a quote," but I don't remember the last book that I read cover to cover twice. And so I did with this one and it was interesting because I saw more, um, foreshadowing and more, well, could be, could be not, and it's tough with this one because it's fiction-nonfiction, like it's his life and I know he probably just threw stuff in there, so I'm like, did he put that in there to foreshadow, so um, and I noticed the yellow color a lot more this time. So I noticed a lot more this time than I did last time. And I thought it's because...well I would look at my notes from last time and I would add to them, I don't know. Maybe it's a good thing, I know I like to read lots of books, I don't watch movies more than once, either. You know, well there's like cheesy movies that I'll watch more than once, but usually no. I watch it once, it's done in my world. (Hannah, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I don't think I've ever, um I don't think I've read a book twice in my life. I've watched many movies twenty times in a row. Yeah, I watch movies over and over and try to learn all the lines (group laughter)...and and, like all the camera angles, but uh (group laughter..). (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Oh, completely, I think you should reread things. But I always find there's so many more good books to read, so why go back and, you know? But there's just so much stuff out there. I know I could get more out of it the second time around, I mean, think of Alice in Wonderland; do you think you're gonna get everything the first time, Sometimes I'm like, "Oh!" I did that with the books I read twice. So I completely see that you're gonna get so much more out of the book, but I'm like, but I could be reading another book. 'Cause I'm like a voracious reader; I ordered like 8 books yesterday on Amazon to read. So, you know..(Hannah, Personal Interview, 5/15/13)

- **Re-reading insights**

It kinda allowed me to step back a little bit, because I already knew what was going to happen, I already knew the story, and kinda consider myself in high school, what I would get from this book. And one thing I got from it, one thing I never considered at all in high school, if I considered it it was an abstract idea, and that was going to jail and what prison would be like. All I know that it would be like was based on the few movies and tv shows that I did watch with that experience, but I don't think I heard a story from anyone's perspective about going to prison. (Chad, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

My second reading, I had more questions I guess, after I was finished, like when he was talking about his friend Lucas who was in the bathroom and had gotten raped, like how do I know that's your friend? What actually happened to Lucas or did that really happen to you and you just decided to leave it out the book? (Taylor, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

Going back through the second time I was really frustrated. Like, I didn't respond to this book with a lot of writing honestly. I underlined things that I liked, I left little notes. But there wasn't, I didn't connect very well. Reading through the second time, when his dad's all like, "Oh man, that girl had a baby when she was nine," Dad is a lying piece of shit. What is wrong with Dad? Why is he doing this? He is making that crap up. There is no way he , and why is he teaching his

child to stereotype so strongly , like to the point where nothing else is important. I didn't like Dad the second time through. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13).

I won't say that I don't re-read books like at all. There are like 10 books that I re-read fairly regularly, but pretty much everything else, I'm like the first time through... like I found my second time through I was a lot more skeptical. Like I did see a lot more foreshadowing, but I didn't see that, I saw that as like, aw man, how much is him being a kid and him... So much there were times I thought are these grown up thoughts or are these teenager thoughts? These seem like grown up thoughts to me. So I was more skeptical my second time around; that was kind of strange. (Lucy, Meeting Four, 4/10/13)

APPENDIX D: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at

A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all Instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: ()
- (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: ()

1) Principal Investigator: Heather Johnston-Durham Rank: graduate student
Dept: College of Educational Theory Ph: 225.803.0761 E-mail: hjohns3@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

Dr. Jacqueline Bach, 225.578-6879
Graduate advisor

IRB# E8024 LSU Proposal # _____
☒ Complete Application
☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title: Reader-Response Revisited: Using Reader-Response Methods with Pre-service Teachers Reading Young Adult Memoirs and Autobiographies

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 10/29/2015

4) Proposal? (yes or no) no If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, If YES, either
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) students enrolled in the College of Education

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Heather Johnston-Durham Date 10/23/12 (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 2

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes ☒ No _____

Reviewer Mathews Signature Robert C Mathews Date 10/30/12

VITA

Heather Johnston-Durham is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After completing a Bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University in 1999, she began teaching English at a local private school. In 2002, she returned to LSU to begin work on a Master's, all while continuing to teach. In 2009, Heather completed her English Education Specialist certificate and sought state certification; she taught high school English and dual-enrollment English 101 courses in Assumption Parish. After the birth of her daughter in 2010, Heather took a break from teaching high school to work on her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction full time, where she had the opportunity to teach an undergraduate course in the Women's and Gender Studies department. Heather also owns a copy-editing business in which she does professional editing for graduate students and professors. She and her family reside in Baton Rouge.